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ABSTRACT

This book contains 15 articles about various aspects of community further education (FE) programs in Great Britain, including program rationales/benefits, administration, and delivery. The following articles are included: "Foreword" (Bradshaw); "Commitment to Community Is Good Business and Practical Politics" (Brook); "Can We Serve Communities in the Market-Place?" (Johnston); "The Community Profile as a Key to Growth and Equity" (Powell, Buffton); "More and Different: Funding Regimes and Community FE" (Tuckett, Powell); "Taking Education and Training into the Community: East Birmingham College" (Addey); "Serving Communities that Lose Their Livelihoods: The Miners of South Wales" (Trotman, Francis); "Mobilising Communities for Learning: The Sheffield Black Literacy Campaign" (Gurnah); "Community Access to Further Education through Open College Credits" (Webb, Redhead); "Supporting Visually Impaired Students in Vocational Education" (Conrell); "When I Get Old..." (Soulsby); "The College in the Countryside" (Cathles, Fazaeli); "Efficient and Effective--and Serving the Community" (Sawyer); "Ireland: Serving a Divided Community" (Shanahan); "Serving the Community: Community Colleges in the USA" (Evans); and "An Education and an Economy for Survival: Committed to Communities in Latin America" (conversation of Luna, Gardener, and Brook translated by Payne). (MN)

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Serving Communities

Editor:
Les Brook

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For Margaret

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Les Brook

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Rennie Johnston has been involved in community education for almost 20 years. After working in further education and community adult education, he has been based at Southampton University for the last eight years where he has been involved in action research projects with unwaged adults, community-based second chance education and staff development work with practitioners from community, adult and further education.

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leading player in the legendary Nicaraguan literacy campaign of the 1980s. He was consultant to the national literacy campaign in Ecuador. In addition to his ALFALIT work, he now has responsibility for other Christian education projects and is actively involved with the World Council of Churches. Carlos has published widely – for UNESCO and others – on the design, methodology and theory of literacy work.

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Foreword

David Bradshaw
Chairman, AfC Editorial Board

Britain is poorly prepared for the economic changes now sweeping the world. As wealth creation in business and manufacture become everywhere more complex and dependent on higher levels of knowledge and standards of skill, so our past failure to recognise the connection between learning and work becomes more clear. Regardless of whether standards have improved or not the need to raise the standards of all school leavers is widely recognised. But this alone will not be enough. Higher levels of knowledge and higher standards of skill among adults are also required, so that reaching the adult population to release their talents and bring them to bear on these problems are also urgent national priorities.

It is not just the front line of wealth generation that needs attention. The difficult problems of restoring and protecting the environment, of tackling the problems of the inner-cities and of lifting the quality of participation in democratic life are further tasks where education is needed in support of strategic action.

So, in brief, runs the definition of today's need and some of it is more than a decade old. In response we have strengthened the provision made in both the colleges and in employment, though much more needs to be done.

At a practical level a parallel vision has been pursued for far longer. This is the vision of learning which enables men and women to understand their own world, take part in public affairs in their own town and find satisfaction from cultural pursuits across a wide range. This is the vision of community education, a vision of reaching out to where people are, rather than expecting them to come to where education is provided. But the distinctions which once helped to define community education are now difficult to sustain. The line between education pursued in support of the world of work and that pursued for more general purposes has become blurred as the same learning can often serve both ends. Communities too were once easy to define. The close relationship between where you lived and where you worked and the small radius within which people lived most of their lives all made tidy definition possible. Now that has gone. Individual commuters

travel long journeys every day within ever larger 'travel to work areas'. Increasing numbers of workers stay at home and use phone and fax to conduct business, often in world-wide networks. Issues which command loyalty and compel individuals to commit time and energy may still be local, but they are as likely to be global. Our sense of identity is no longer constrained by location while groups identified by common interests are now widely dispersed.

It is this complex web of issues that Les Brook and the other authors of this book explore. Starting from the organising principle of communities defined by common interest, the old concept of a geographically defined community remains applicable in only a few cases, while its more diffuse and abstract successor emerges as a more helpful concept and the most productive way of providing for the learning needs of many. This book, by the range of its examples, is a useful reminder that complex issues usually require well co-ordinated but essentially multi-solution responses. But one principle remains unchanged – an abiding idealism and belief in education as a means through which everyone can succeed. Les Brook and his team restate that view and help to show how it can still be achieved in a changing world.

Section A: Introduction

Chapter 1 **Commitment to community is good business and practical politics**
Les Brook

Chapter 2 **Can we serve communities in the market-place?**
Rennie Johnston

Chapter 1: Commitment to community is good business and practical politics

Les Brook

After years in which access, equity, mass participation, disability and disadvantage, lifelong learning and commitment to communities were seen as fringe interests in further education (FE), there is now a growing and widespread recognition that they may hold the key to Britain's future.

In part, it has happened because those in business and their political allies are worried and baffled by the immediate issue of recession and the long-term prospects for Britain's economy. It is now officially admitted that this could have something to do with an elitist education system and the businesses world's own failure to train its workforce. However, the shift in attitudes is not just one way. Those who have held to a radical approach are now easily embarrassed when reminded of their former opposition to the vocational curriculum and their steadfast defence of non-accredited learning programmes.

As business hesitatingly adopts a demanding set of National Education and Training Targets (CBI 1991), radical post-school educators can see similarities between their long-standing agenda for change and the agenda that will be a necessity if the targets are to be achieved.

It is my contention that it is those who are committed both to communities and to vocational education who offer the most convincing answers to the 'Big Issue' facing further education in Britain today.

The big issue

That big issue is not the incorporation of FE colleges but the sector's response to an economy which looks frail in today's competitive environment and, in the context of the challenges of the 21st century, ready for the Grim Reaper. It would be foolish to attribute this weakness to any single factor but there are few who do not regard our lamentable education and training record as significant.

Consider the facts:

> A major barrier to upgrading and even sustaining competitive advantage in industry [has been the way] the British educational system has badly lagged behind that of all the nations we studied. Access to top quality education has been limited to a few, and a smaller percentage of students go on to higher education than in most other advanced nations... (Porter 1990)

Porter locates the 'more serious problem' as being 'the education of the average student'. The key skill and qualification deficiencies are not at graduate level but with the education and training of the mass of working people. Even in the late 1980s – before the remarkable expansion in higher education (HE), now catering for 20 per cent of youngsters in England and 25 per cent in Scotland – 10 per cent of our workforce were graduates, whilst the figures in France, the Netherlands and Germany were not significantly different: seven, eight and 11 per cent respectively (Layard *et al.* 1992).

On the other hand, 63 per cent of British workers had no vocational qualification whatsoever. Precisely this same proportion – 63 per cent – of German workers were qualified at craft and technician level (Layard *et al.* 1992). Whilst we don't have a classical illiteracy problem (only 300,000 can do 'nothing'), 15 per cent of our adult population cannot function effectively in relatively simple situations (Wells 1993). Even amongst FE students, 40 per cent will need help with communication skills if they are to achieve NVQ Level II (ALBSU 1993).

The position of some communities is dramatically worse. In his contribution to this book, Ahmed Gurnah quotes a 1987 study by Sheffield City Council of the local Yemeni community. In this study, 82 per cent of men and 67 per cent of women defined themselves as not fluent in English and 86 per cent of the men as not able to read English fluently (Sheffield City Council/DEED 1988).

Our qualification position is so poor that one commentator says:

> Britain has a lumpen proletariat unlike any other advanced nation. (Layard *et al.* 1992)

The demands of the modern economy

Now consider the future. The character of the modern economy is being transformed, and with it the demands on the workforce. Whilst there is little doubt that some de-skilling is taking place, the overall thrust is towards a much greater proportion of higher skill jobs (Employment Department 1992). By 2000 – in less than seven years – 70 per cent of all jobs in Europe will require skills at technician level or above, and 90 per cent of all new jobs in the UK will require graduates (CBI Head of Training, Margaret Murray, quoted by Mager 1992). A study by the Institute of Manpower Studies confirms what daily experience tells us – that a

high proportion of jobs are already closed to those with limited basic skills (Atkinson and Spilsbury 1993). And here's the rub:

> Five out of six people in the workforce of the year 2000 are already at work, and three out of six finished their formal education before 1975. (Rajan 1992)

In the modern economy, investment in people has become the critical issue in wealth creation. Success depends on using every ounce of talent (Ball 1993), yet it is the people we spoke of earlier, the people with such an inadequate level of skills and qualifications, who will form the bulk of the workers in the skills-hungry economy at the start of the 21st century.

True, the workforce will include some of the young people who left school in the 1990s, but the number of these young entrants by comparison with previous generations has declined dramatically. Not only is the age cohort small, the flow of junior labour has declined to a trickle. The recession of the early 1990s has denied them easy entry to the job market and they have found their way into educational careers, confirming a trend which started before the recession, and probably establishing a new staying-on culture. In 1991, fewer than 250,000 16 year old school-leavers entered the labour force compared with 400,000 three years earlier (Employment Department 1992). In 1992, only seven per cent of the 16 year olds in Croydon found their way in to work, and the increase in the staying-on rate in two years was 20 percentage points (Croydon Careers Service 1992).

So we cannot look to natural wastage to cure the massive skill deficiency from which we suffer, and which will become more and more significant as the decade progresses. Insofar as the workforce is replenished in this period, it will be the adult population – notably women who will account for a remarkable 85 per cent of employment growth in the 1990s – that will supply the recruits. This continues the dramatic changes of the 1970s and '80s during which the number of women in employment increased by 30 per cent (Employment Department 1992).

In summary:

> Adult learners are not marginal. They are central to the country's economic regeneration. (NIACE 1990)

If the UK economy is to survive and prosper, it will do so very largely on the back of an older version of an existing workforce which is poorly skilled and grossly under-prepared for the challenge. Community further education represents ideas and practices that are uniquely fitted to this situation.

But what is community further education?

Community and communities

Both 'community FE' and 'community' are slippery notions, but that does not make them worthless. A definition of neither will be attempted here. Instead, some of the central ideas are considered.

All the writers in this book work with a notion of 'community'. It expresses something important about human existence:

> ...there is a profound, spontaneous desire for what we might call organic community among people of all classes in Britain. The word community is popular because through it people can express this yearning for community with each other... (Colin Kirkwood quoted by Colin Fletcher, 1980)

Community is about people, their value and their inter-connection. It is therefore about co-operation and support – and equity. Those committed to community have a special concern for people who are downtrodden, in difficulties, or who have additional needs.

Alongside 'community values', the critical idea is sociological – that a community is a grouping of people with something in common. Notions of common interest and ideas, of identity, are at the heart of why people act and how they act. These same notions are at the heart of who they act with.

Obvious points, but critical because that commonality is the vital ingredient for services such as colleges. In Britain, if further education is going to make any impact on whole sections of the population – especially traditional non-users – it will do so only when it sees and deals with them not as isolated individuals but members of groups, of communities.

I am comfortable with the general if not always explicit agreement among the writers in this book that it is important to embrace the notion of 'communities' and not just 'community'; that there is a kaleidoscopic variety of factors that can form the basis for the feelings and interaction we call community – neighbourhood, ethnic origin, economic position, age, gender, dependence on a particular industry or firm – and that a wide variety of communities mushroom as a result. It is understood that communities are often in competition or even conflict with one another. The community education to which we subscribe is not one in which people are in harmony and tensions and inequalities absent. If we are to serve communities, we have to recognise these conflicts and address them. Sometimes that will mean taking sides.

Of course it is not always the case that objective common interests lead to the subjective feelings and involvement which is at the heart of 'real' community. Whilst that is of some consequence to social agencies, for most practical purposes

what we have to recognise and work with is the community of objective reality – for example the reality of being one of a large number of people who cannot afford college fees.

Community education and community further education

These values and the social analysis lead to a number of basic educational and political ideas which have informed the community education movement since the 1920s (see Jennings, 1980). They include the following.

- Social agencies exist to serve the people, not vice versa. This requires a high level of knowledge and understanding of the community (see Powell and Buffton, Chapter 3 in this book). It involves a readiness to meet the people on their own ground and to offer services close to the client.
- Educational organisations have a dual role, aiming to tackle both social and educational issues simultaneously (see the interview with Carlos Tamez Luna, Chapter 15). Community cohesion and development are key objectives alongside individual development, certification and progression. The two are seen as interdependent: both are necessary.
- The enterprise is conducted with the people and not just for them. Community educators respect the learning and the strength of communities which, in formal educational and social terms, are profoundly poor, and often take the community as the object of study as well as the place for social action (see Shanahan, Chapter 13). The job of the educator is to encourage people to see their own strengths, to value the people and their strengths, to assist people to identify and articulate their needs and to develop and manage their own service, with the ultimate objective of taking control of their own lives. 'Empowerment' is a key community education concept.
- Co-operation and networking between educational institutions and other agencies is basic good practice. It is also cost-effective.
- Learning is not only for young people. The whole community should be involved. It is a life-long activity.

Community further education is good business and practical politics

The UK's economic position, and especially its skills crisis analysed earlier, offer a real incentive for FE to embrace the community education model and an opportunity for community educators to 'appropriate' vocational education.

Yet at first glance, community further education appears at odds with the entire drift of social policy for the last decade and more, and at odds with the specifics of the educational market economy. This argument is developed strongly by Rennie Johnston in Chapter 2. The market is not value free, he says, and the market does not enhance community values. Goods are not distributed according to need and vulnerable people are not protected.

All this is true, and there's more. For example, in most of the social services in which the market principle has been introduced, the customer – supposedly the monarch of true markets in goods and services – actually has a peripheral role. In the health service, the market operates between organisations and between health professionals and managers. The patient is a financial value in inter-agency balance sheets, not an individual with personal power through purchasing.

In incorporated further and higher education, a similar curiosity has been created. The 'market' is a financial interplay between two government quangos and a host of institutions. The customers, the students, have no active role. Indeed, there is a strong argument that their market power has actually been reduced by the new arrangements. Not only have they lost an agency, the local education authority (LEA), over which they had some control and which in turn controlled the colleges, but the strength of their collective choices on the pattern of provision will now face the mighty, multi-billion pound buying power of the funding councils. If the latter place a premium on full-time students, god help the part-timers!

Yet there are aspects of the market approach which sit more than neatly with commitment to the community. We find these not in the particular machinery that has been established to manage the colleges (although the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) has given one big push for community further education [FEFC circular quoted by Powell and Buffton in Chapter 3]) but in notions like marketing, market research, market segmentation and penetration. Recently, I even heard the chair of a well-known FE body refer to communities as 'marketing niches'.

Commitment to community means orientation to the market. It proceeds from a clear understanding of its complexity, its different segments or communities. It demands that we understand that market well, and recognises that our products must be targeted and carefully tailored to the groups we seek to serve. It recognises that the 'sale' of educational products to particular communities requires a radically different approach from the standard pitch adopted by the seller of soap powder or kitchen cabinets. No amount of 'buy this' brochures can substitute for the careful development of a relationship of trust with a community (see Johnston, Gurnah and Trotman/Francis, Chapters 2, 7 and 6), the joint fashioning of the products to be 'sold', their delivery at a time and place to suit the customer, full commitment to the customer's interests, close collaboration with community groups and networking with voluntary, public and private agencies.

Bob Powell and Jacqui Buffton are surely right when they argue that:

> Successful corporate institutions will be those that know, understand and respond to their local community's learning needs. Student enrolments increase, college viability is assured... (see Chapter 3)

So the methodology of community education makes community FE highly practical in current circumstances. However, it is community FE's commitment to and experience of particular client groups that makes it a winner. The economic realities of the 1990s require nothing less than mass participation education and training. Despite what Government does to protect A levels, they cannot buck the market: elitism is out. Our prime focus must be on 'the average student', on groups on the periphery of the labour market who are now being drawn in, and on employed adult workers whose experience of education has been limited, and in too many cases an experience of failure.

It is those committed to community who know these groups and know how to work with them, as this book amply illustrates. The Sheffield Literacy Campaign and the Open College Networks (see Gurnah and Webb/Redhead, Chapters 7 and 8) are not only superb examples of commitment to community: they are superb examples of marketing, of further education for a mass audience, and of working with groups which in former times would have been written out of the script.

The college in the community

However, this successful association with particular client groups has had an unfortunate side effect for community FE.

Within post-school education in Britain, 'community education' is overwhelmingly associated with adult non-vocational and/or basic education, with 'the disadvantaged', and with neighbourhood provision. There are innumerable examples of sections, departments or faculties of colleges that are designated 'community education'. The effect has been to establish the concept of community education as a narrow one in the minds of post-school educators, to create an organisational divide between areas of activity that should be complementary (see Sawyer, Chapter 12), to marginalise many pioneering, front-line staff, to limit progression for many students – and thus to deprive vocational further education of much of its potential.

It is of course immensely curious to name one part of a college 'the community education department'. If that part is for the community, what's the constituency of the rest? Aliens perhaps? In recent years as the term 'community college' became a fashionable designation for the FE college (NATFHE 1991), I found myself in debate with many who took the view that the FE college was by definition a community college. The core of this argument, and its strength, is that

FE colleges are local, that they typically serve a geographically-defined community, and that they draw overwhelmingly from local people. But for me this does not make an FE college a community college; neither is such a college created by assigning it that name.

A community college is one which practises commitment to the community, or at least is making a sustained effort in that direction in its deeds and not just its words. Since the definition of what this means is imprecise and the criteria so numerous, this may appear untestable, but not so. When it comes to the nitty-gritty, colleges should be judged as 'community colleges' by the extent of their orientation to the special character of their context, and in particular by the service they provide those people whom society and its educational agencies have neglected. Ruth Silver of Lewisham College, an FE principal determined to create a community college, put it to me like this: 'If I wanted, I could easily plan a curriculum programme that I know I could fill but which would ignore the fact that the college serves an inner-city patch with many black students, with many single parents'. She is right, and those who simply run local colleges have no right to claim them as community colleges.

The immense changes resulting from the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 offer a chance to reconsider the purposes and functions of colleges and re-locate them within their community.

Colleges are in a remarkably strong position to serve communities:

> Colleges ... should ... position themselves so as to respond both to employment-related demand and the individual and group learning needs of community residents. The strength of the college is that it is one of the few local public sector organisations which has the facilities to respond to both. With the will to do so, and the information on where to target resources, the college becomes the powerful focus of continuing education and training opportunities for its community (see Powell and Buffton, Chapter 3 of this book).

But colleges have the potential to be even more influential, as agencies for community regeneration and for social and economic development. In this book, that strand is represented by two university colleges: Magee in Northern Ireland and Swansea in Wales; and by East Birmingham, an FE college. There are other honourable examples in the FE sector (FEU 1991). It can of course be perfectly legitimate for a college to 'stick to the knitting' of providing courses and individual opportunities and to allow others to worry about broader issues. However, this cannot be defended where these issues have a direct impact on a number of individual students or even on college life in general. No college can or should ignore widespread unemployment or racism. Colleges have an obligation to address major social changes that take place in their locality – not only the closure of the

local dockyard but also the arrival of large numbers of refugees with pitiful social support.

I would go further. In areas where housing is a major issue, colleges that are interested in training building workers and the future of the construction industry but not in homelessness are one-dimensional and myopic. That is not to say that they should be running the local branch of Shelter or leading a campaign for the building of more dwellings with affordable rents. But they could ensure that the construction curriculum takes full account of the housing problem; they might deploy their resources towards the issue by allowing campaigning groups to use their premises rent-free, by offering technical advice and support to those groups, or by directing practical work towards property renovation rather than workshop follies; and they could so organise their activities and priorities to ensure that the learning needs of those in bed and breakfast accommodation are addressed through outreach work and flexible learning opportunities.

Private business or public service?

Fanciful and idealistic? Inconsistent with the whole thrust of the New Order in FE? I think not.

It would be stupid not to acknowledge that colleges are being thrust bodily into becoming businesses, and that the public service model can at times look like an anachronism. It is not, and it is self-defeating to embrace the inaccurate notion of a college corporation with only one concern – the bottom line – and one objective – profit. Of course, no college is doing that explicitly: none so far as I am aware has adopted a mission statement reflecting Wall Street values. But that does not mean that some are not genuflecting before the accountant's altar rather than remembering what they should be all about, that their objectives are social and educational, that the job of management is to establish goals and organise resources to meet these goals – rather than vice-versa.

In this opening chapter, I've argued that in reality, community FE is good business. Progressive business people will not find such a conjunction surprising nor untenable; witness their own attempts to demonstrate their community credentials. In this respect, private business and public service have features in common.

So is the general feeling mistaken that the two are fundamentally different? I think not, and I offer the quality test to make the point.

In business, quality of product is generally defined in terms of fitness for the client's purpose. The FEFC's definition (FEFC 1992) echoes this view. This is inadequate for a public service which must be fundamentally concerned with who the clients are, whether its service really is to the public or to a fraction of it. Given the facts of finite resources and almost infinite demand, some rationing is inevitable.

But is that rationing being managed in a way that is open, policy-driven and consistent with public objectives? Or is it a function of managerial ignorance or indifference, of the privileges enjoyed by certain groups, of the absence of childcare facilities, or of the physical inaccessibility of the toilets?

For colleges, equity is not an add-on. It is part of quality. We must reject the view that equity and excellence are opposed. They are not. Both are fundamental to the creation of a first class post-school education service.

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Chapter 2: Can we serve communities in the market-place?

Rennie Johnston

Within an increasingly unequal society, I believe the need is stronger than ever to develop and promote education for the community in the interests of equity, social justice and social cohesion. This chapter traces the policy context of education in the '90s, examines critically the effects of the continuing 'marketisation' of education, particularly in the post-compulsory sector, and reviews the possibilities and problems this poses for serving communities. It then argues that service to a variety of different communities of interest within the local constituency of a college means engaging with current non-participants in a positive, long-term and humble negotiation about exactly what education for community might be.

A new policy context

The political, economic and ideological climate has changed dramatically since the 1960s and early '70s with their underlying concerns for social welfare, personal development and a critical citizenry. The ideological onslaught of Thatcherism, picking up on the burgeoning costs of social welfare and a feeling that the welfare state was dominated by and served the interests of middle-class reformers (like educators), was very successful in fostering and exploiting a popular opposition to the work of 'welfare bureaucrats' and 'professional do-gooders'. Thus it became:

> ...acceptable, even respectable, to see the publicly-financed institutions of education, health and social welfare as a national liability rather than a national asset. By the end of the decade, the New Right rhetoric had transformed the state from a beast of burden into a beast of prey. (Martin 1990)

In relation to the education services, this new approach to social policy built on the '70s legacy of the Black Papers' critique of progressive education and the economic instrumentalism of Jim Callaghan's Great Debate to prepare the ground for the substantive changes of the Education Reform Act 1988. This slow but significant

move towards new educational legislation was a result of consensus between the more traditional cultural conservatives and the more radical economic liberals within the Conservative government. As such it reflected two increasingly prevalent views of education under the Thatcher government, identified by Dale as 'education in the national interest', incorporating a vocationally-dominated curriculum, and 'education in the private interest', to prepare a population of possessive individualists (Dale 1989).

Now, in the softer '90s, the ideological and legislative thrust towards education has continued apace, to the extent that a radical re-shaping of educational attitudes, policies and structures has become a central plank of John Major's new consumerism, as exemplified by the measures of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992.

Educators cannot argue against the aims of higher educational standards, greater accountability for public services, a more coherent system of vocational qualifications, parity of esteem between the vocational and the academic and a broader-based mass higher education system. Equally, a more explicit focus on quality and accountability, outcomes and progression cannot be resisted. Indeed, at a macro level, we must welcome a greater state interest in further and higher education and the opportunities this presents for the creation of a coherent enabling framework for future development. At a micro level, we cannot continue to rely solely on the professional judgment of educators in developing any education or training process and we can support the idea of addressing the rights of learners as is beginning to happen in the recent growth of student charters.

However, we need also to be aware of how the market is working in further and higher education, consider critically whether current educational means can achieve our desired ends, ensure that short-term survival strategies do not prejudice long-term development and disentangle the claims of rhetoric from actual outcomes.

The workings of the market

The market is not value free. Market forces do not enhance welfare values such as equity, fairness and communality. They do not distribute goods according to need and they do not protect vulnerable people (Abel-Smith and Titmuss 1987). If any further economic evidence is necessary, we could point to the fact that in the last decade the top 10 per cent of the UK population doubled their real incomes while the bottom 10 per cent grew poorer (Kingdom 1992). In social terms, if any of us does not know or has not met any of the growing army of unemployed and homeless in this country, we can always read research about the frightening growth of urban poverty and the underclass in the USA, bastion of market forces and tapering welfare (McFate 1991). Whether or not there was an economic miracle in the '80s, we are now, in the '90s, beginning to understand the price that

has been paid and to realise the limits of the trickle-down effect where two-thirds of the population prosper and one-third suffers.

J K Galbraith has labelled this state of affairs 'the culture of contentment' (Galbraith 1992) where short-term, essentially private gains obscure long-term social problems. Indeed, just as the market-place is inequitable, so it does not facilitate long-term planning or a broad perspective, appearing to take at face value Keynes's famous pronouncement that in the long-term we are all dead. Certainly in a UK context, the current market emphasis has been widely criticised for focusing too much on the short-term and failing totally to generate sufficient investment in plant, pits, public goods or people.

The workings of the market in education

In commenting on market forces in education, Ruth Jonathan teases out the effect of a combination of two apparently contradictory tendencies in social policy: greater state control allied to increased market deregulation. She makes a powerful point that, notwithstanding the rhetoric of choice:

> What is sold as a loosening of the structure is in fact a change in that structure and what results is not an increase in individual freedom but a redistribution of freedoms and opportunities amongst groups of individuals and a re-drawing of the parameters of social change itself. (Jonathan 1990)

So the market is not free. In fact, in the further and higher education sectors, the new market-place is a curious one, but one which supports Ruth Jonathan's analysis. In funding matters, the state acts as a monopoly customer facing many producers. If anything, market reforms have meant a weakening of the influence of students, the people you might think were, or at least should be, the real customers. At the same time as espousing worthwhile educational aims like greater participation in further and higher education, the government is also operating another economic and political agenda which involves reducing public expenditure, squeezing unit costs and restricting the working space for educators.

In this market-place, those with least power have least choice, something easy to reconcile with the recent experience of 'training' for both unemployed young people and adults which, obsessed with short-term instrumental considerations, and often in the name of student-centredness and choice, institutionalises de-skilling, obscures unemployment levels and teaches the 'disadvantaged' to know their place. In reviewing a succession of such government schemes which focus on 'training without jobs', Andy Green makes the telling observation that:

> They have been...more concerned with inculcating work discipline, lowering wage expectations and providing a social skills training instrumentally designed to control social attitudes. (Green 1991)

The educational market favours those who already possess cultural capital. This can be readily demonstrated in relation to one of the acknowledged success stories of the further and higher education sector – access. It is salutary to take note of the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) research by Wolverhampton Polytechnic which demonstrated that unless access courses were specifically targeted, the social, gender and ethnic profile of students recruited through access courses exactly paralleled those recruited through conventional routes (Tuckett 1991).

In a further confirmation of this point, in her recent study of access to education for non-participant adults, Veronica McGivney has pointed to growing fears within FE of the setting up of a 'second creaming' process where '...those people in better material circumstances, with more confidence and with a higher level of initial schooling' (McGivney 1990) benefit most from access opportunities. As access moves further into the mainstream (and mainstream funding structures) it runs the risk of becoming institutionalised and colonised and, ironically, working against broader-based accessibility. Maggie Woodrow, ever an articulate advocate of access, nevertheless acknowledges the problem that access courses can be seen (and used) as a form of social control and as a safety valve in preserving and retaining a fundamentally exclusive and elitist higher education system (1992).

The negative effects of the educational market-place must be recognised and tackled. If we are to move towards greater equity, we have to engage current non-participants in a meaningful and successful educational process. If we are to develop our national and local economic performance, there is a widely-recognised human capital argument to lend weight to this. If we are to continue to expand further and higher education and raise its profile, there is a demographic dimension that many institutions have already found highly persuasive in shaping their drive for new students. However, it still remains to identify more clearly who the current non-participant communities are, why they don't participate, and how best to explore and develop with them education for community.

The non-participants

Though there is undoubtedly a major problem of educational non-participation amongst young people – a problem currently being remedied with ferocious success through the collapse of the youth labour market and the mass flight of youth to full-time study – the fact is that the big issue is with adults. They are far more numerous, far less well educated, and in vocational education terms, represent the overwhelming challenge. Some 80 per cent of the workers of the year 2000 are in the workforce today, and 63 per cent of current workers have no vocational qualification (Hunt and Jackson 1992, and Layard *et al.* 1992).

Veronica McGivney identifies five main non-participant adult groups: unskilled and semi-skilled manual workers; the unemployed; women with dependent children; older people; and ethnic minority groups. A connection can be made between these and an on-going re-structuring of the labour market where there is a growing division between a primary, highly-skilled, well-paid, relatively secure core (predominantly male and white), and a growing secondary group or periphery (mainly female and/or frequently non-white) where work is poorly paid and often part-time and sporadic – if it exists at all. In a parallel development, the traditional working class community is being replaced by a much more diverse collection of communities of interest, identity and difference whose particular concerns, apart from economic survival, are the inequalities related to poverty, race, gender, disability, age and sexuality.

In moving beyond 'possessive individualism' (Dale 1989) and attempting to conceptualise community, educators need to avoid falling into the trap of fondly imagining some cosy, homogeneous ideal that does not exist and instead take account of the diverse, pluralistic and unequal society of today. In this context, Colin Fletcher in the UK (1980) and Stephen Brookfield in the USA (1983) have identified a very useful and fundamental distinction between a 'liberal' and 'liberating' concept of education. Whereas a liberal notion assumes that a person is free and equal and that education can serve the needs of all members of the community at any one time, a liberating notion understands that communities are inevitably divided by considerations of an economic, political and ethnic nature. It therefore focuses its attention on developing an educational process which engages with unequal communities in an attempt to help them tackle the inequalities which impact on their lives. This has been the underlying rationale for a long history of community-based adult education work that concentrates on developing small-scale redistributive and alternative strategies for working with specific communities of interest who have missed out on mainstream provision or are discriminated against in some way.

Such an analysis can certainly inform and help to shape the wider post-compulsory sector's contacts and negotiation with communities that are fundamentally different from the more traditional FE communities of employers or young learners. I believe that further and higher education establishments need not only to espouse universal community values like equity, social justice and social cohesion, but also relate this to a clearer appreciation and understanding of the politics of difference (Young 1990 and Gilroy 1987). Such an approach acknowledges the diversity and autonomy of distinct communities of interest, but recognises that such groups also share common interests and circumstances which can be addressed by educators.

Crucially, it should not be a project-based or short-term funded approach. This can easily end up being marginalised in relation to mainstream further and higher

education and offering what might appear no more than a second-rate curriculum. Rather, it should be one important end of a comprehensive spectrum of education and training provision for all, where the institution certainly takes particular account of the different starting points of students in the community but shows a commitment to their retention, success and progression within the mainstream.

Engaging with local communities

As the traditions and practices of further education and adult education inevitably come together for reasons of demographics, policy and survival, it is obvious where the strategic power is being concentrated. In this context, educators may feel relatively helpless in the face of powerful forces directed from above.

However, we can take heart from the knowledge that the inter-relationship of policy to practice is complex and unpredictable. Certainly, Michael Apple's understanding of the history of educational policy-making shows that:

> Conflict, compromise, mediation, the uses of policies for one's own interests that may be different from those envisioned by state policy-makers; all signify anything but passive acquiescence. (Apple 1989)

So, just as it appears that a centrally controlled market has been created to focus local colleges on national priorities, the very instrument of that central control – the Further Education Funding Council – firmly demands that colleges draw up their plans against an analysis of their local community (FEFC **Circular 92/18**). In this process, there is always likely to be some room for compromise, mediation and unanticipated outcomes.

If further and higher education is to engage more positively with local communities, institutions need to move beyond the loaded language of the market and an over-reliance on top-down funding mechanisms like franchising. If a mission to serve the community and to foster equal opportunities is to be more than rhetorical window-dressing, colleges must have an institutional commitment and a theory of educational practice which informs college action, performance and staff development and so guards against an all too easy economic and market reductionism which says 'Of course, we'd like but we can't afford to'.

In trying to serve communities better, colleges need to face up to major questions about corporate approach and communications, and curriculum. The supermarket approach to curriculum and marketing must be avoided. Jacqui Johnson expresses a view that is highly critical of some of the business-inspired methods so enthusiastically adopted in a growing number of colleges:

> If the government is serious in promoting vocational education and training in the skills needed for the 21st century, then the barrow boy mentality of

> the new crop of principals must be discouraged. The idea that a further education college can be run along the same lines as a supermarket, the conveyor-belt approach that is rapidly acquiring the state of conventional wisdom will in the long-term destroy quality and lower standards, the very things that the government claims to be upholding. (Johnson 1992)

A supermarket analogy is particularly inappropriate for the process of serving communities – this involves a long-term and sensitive interchange and negotiation between educators and the public rather than a mere take-it-or-leave-it relationship. While marketing clearly has its place in an FE context, too often it allocates consumers a passive role, making a purely reactive choice to a limited menu of education and training possibilities. It may be effective in reaching students with cultural capital and self-confidence, but it is less likely to impact on the lives of people with little power or to penetrate what Freire has called their 'culture of silence' (Freire 1990).

From my own experience of working with unwaged adults, it is clear that the whole process of serving communities has to be much more than this. It is a matter of establishing understanding, credibility and trust between educators, their institutions and the public. Paradoxically, good practice in this field has much in common with good practice in the development of full-cost, customised courses with college business customers where an extended dialogue is recognised as critical to clinching the deal and getting repeat orders. Community outreach is similarly a long-term process which involves listening, negotiating and only then developing an appropriate curriculum.

A community dimension within the curriculum

A more comprehensive national post-compulsory education and training framework will clearly help educators both to reach non-participants and to ensure that non-traditional students have every chance to make a success of their further education careers. However, this may not be sufficient in itself. Further localised attention will need to be paid to the key issues of needs analysis, outcomes and progression.

Needs analysis is a complex process in the curricular engagement with communities. There are a number of useful recent studies sponsored by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE), the Further Education Unit (FEU), the DES Programme for the Adult Unemployed (REPLAN) and the Unit for the Development of Adult and Continuing Education (UDACE) which identify barriers to access and participation and highlight good practice both in overcoming these barriers and engaging in a meaningful dialogue about educational needs with non-traditional students. But, in this context, colleges and their staff need to guard against any idea either of explicitly or implicitly relying on a simplistic 'technology of needs-meeting' where some kind of formula or checklist is first identified and

then delegated to be applied by a middle-person, often of low status in the institution but, by virtue of class, gender or race (or better still, all three) deemed acceptable to the community. In complete contrast, identifying and responding to community needs will require a whole college commitment that moves beyond creating a new college image, adopting a new community language or conveniently linking needs to provision that already exists.

At the other end of the curricular process, in order to ensure that non-traditional students get a high quality service from the further and higher education sector, college educators will need to be rigorous in monitoring and facilitating progression and outcomes. However, we need also to realise the limitations of reducing these solely to externally-constructed, vocationally-related categories that fit in with college objectives and funding structures. This may serve only to deny the particular starting-points and circumstances of many potential students in the community as well as to ignore the economic reality of high and rising unemployment.

Conclusion

The burden of dealing with incorporation is a large one for F and HE establishments and the combined forces of government policy and market forces are powerful and unrelenting. In these difficult times, we should try to remind ourselves that changes and stresses are often accompanied by new responsibilities, challenges and possibilities.

With incorporation comes greater (if cash-limited) autonomy and a government brief to focus on quality and a massive increase in participation. This clearly offers a chance for FE to move centre-stage in the creation of a new learning society. In a rapidly changing world, colleges are well placed to help address some key issues for the future: a new approach to employment and training; a more coherent post-school educational framework; and a more positive attitude to learning on the part of the parents of tomorrow.

However, this will not be possible if colleges become compliant and uncritical slaves to an unequal and rigged market-place, restrict their social and educational vision and neglect public accountability. It will not be possible if they fail to explore education for community and fail to serve communities.

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Section B: College management for the community

Chapter 3 **The community profile as a key to growth and equity**
Bob Powell and Jacqui Buffton

Chapter 4 **More and different: funding regimes and community FE**
Alan Tuckett and Bob Powell

Chapter 3: The community profile as a key to growth and equity

Bob Powell
and
Jacqui Buffton

The government has set a target for growth for further education – 25 per cent over three years; but this growth, as provided for in the 1992 Autumn Statement, will not be achieved through colleges applying tried and tested planning and recruitment strategies. For further education, as with HE expansion, more will mean different – in terms of client and in terms of approach (Ball 1990). This chapter argues that a strategic focus on the unmet needs of community members, particularly those who have traditionally not been attracted by what FE has to offer, not only makes sense in terms of social equity: it is also central to a college's growth – growth which will generate income attached to additional student enrolments. In order to achieve this increase in student throughput demanded by government policy, and emphasised in the Secretary of State's early guidance to the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC), colleges need to learn more about the communities they serve.

FE colleges are inextricably linked with their local setting. To develop a college mission and marketing strategy in relative ignorance of the make-up of the locality, and to plan in the absence of detailed analysis of the socio-economic environment in which the college operates, is likely to render it irrelevant to some of its potential clientele. Such an approach, as well as being undemocratic, will ultimately compromise institutional viability.

Colleges that are serious about their role and about their future must undertake a 'community profile'. In marketing terms, such an exercise can lead to the identification of growth sectors. In political terms, by extending their knowledge of the local community, colleges will be better positioned to enhance their local standing. In terms of equity, information on the make-up of the communities served by the college provides a comparator against which college activity can be assessed and developed. The college will also be satisfying FEFC planning requirements.

Limitations of current planning information

The FEFC has indicated it wishes:

> ...to understand the extent to which individual colleges are and are not planning to meet the needs which they have identified in their local communities. [Thus] each college's mission and strategic plan *should be developed in the light of a review of the needs of the college's local community for further education*, including consideration of existing provision. Some colleges serve wider needs as well as the local community. Such colleges will wish to refer to this in their plan. However, *the Council's duty to secure adequacy of provision leads it to have an interest primarily in the extent to which colleges are meeting local needs.* (FEFC 1992 – authors' emphasis added.)

FEFC also acknowledges that 'many colleges are relatively inexperienced in planning strategically'. Planning, where it has taken place at all at college level, has tended to be informed by two factors: data on recent and currently enrolled students; and information on employers' demand for skilled labour. Many colleges have not planned proactively on the basis of hard data until very recently. They have tended to react to an understanding of local market conditions as derived from informal and selective observations from business and resident community contacts. A more strategic approach involving a better understanding of local communities has been evident over the past five years, through work-related further education planning and post-Education Reform Act plans, both of which had a direct effect on college budgets. Much recent FE planning has, however, taken place at local education authority level rather than institutional level.

Information already gathered for FESR (Further Education Statistical Record) purposes can be used to provide a 'student profile' – the 'shape' of college intake in terms of gender, age, location and ethnicity. Additional information, identifying students whose economic circumstance entitle them to fee concessions, or those whose learning programme might be enhanced by specialist support, can be collected on enrolment forms. However, it is self-evident that such exercises do not identify potential learners that the college has failed to attract.

If growth areas are to be identified, student information – at course, cost centre or college-wide level – needs to be compared with a profile of the local population to identify mismatch. This will not only identify market segments which can be further exploited, but will illuminate sectors of the population which are not being given an equitable response: such an analysis may identify areas of college provision that attract disproportionately heavy enrolments (or under-recruit) from, for example, women, members of particular ethnic communities, unemployed people, mature learners or residents of particular housing estates or hamlets. Such growth

opportunities will, however, only translate into increased enrolments (and thereby satisfy calls for expansion) if the college proactively responds to the variety of learning needs of the traditional non-participants within the community through curricular innovation and new delivery strategies.

Local labour market intelligence (LLMI) is often retrospective. That which is predictive has often proved inaccurate, is frequently aggregated at a level too remote from the individual institution, and relates to travel to work areas which are too general for use by specific colleges. Formal LLMI is often less persuasive than informal but shrewdly assessed information provided by college staff on the basis of local contacts. In any event, the labour market is mediated through the reality of student demand.

Colleges will require a perspective on local learning needs which, for planning purposes, is broader than LLMI since much of what colleges do – and which is FEFC funded – is not directly oriented to the labour market, e.g. GCSE and A level provision.

The broader view

A strategic planning exercise which aims to develop a comprehensive understanding of the learning requirements of the community served by the college, and thus identify potential new or expandable markets, will in addition to college-held data draw upon a range of hard and soft information from a variety of external sources. Recent work by the Leeds Business School Policy Research Unit refers to the need for agencies to undertake a social audit designed to:

> Reveal the health or quality of life in particular communities [resulting] from the interplay of public services, housing, employment, the natural environment and many other factors. Information about these factors is gained both from official figures gathered from various government departments and local economic information, as well as the thoughts and feelings of the people who live in the area and receive the services. (Percy Smith 1990)

The resultant picture of the locality can be used to:

- identify the learning needs of the community, the resources that currently exist to respond to those needs (including provision made by other agencies) and the shortfall between needs and resources;
- target college resources to areas of unmet need;
- improve the quality of college service delivery;
- actively involve community groups and members in the planning process;
- locate the college in broad community development initiatives involving a wide range of agencies; and

- evaluate policy outcomes and monitor the impact of policy change on communities.

While these benefits are specific to the institution, a college need not 'go it alone' in conducting a social audit. The resources, talents, skills and experience of other agencies, and within the community itself, can be harnessed, co-ordinated and inspired. The historic positioning of a college with links with local authorities, government departments, the employment sector and the population served by the institution nonetheless make it a potentially central catalyst for inter-agency collaboration.

Undertaking a community profile: an example

Collecting the data

A community profile will begin with the collection of data about the locality and its population. Essentially sophisticated market research, this provides a baseline of information from which analysis and strategy can be developed. Readily available data recently collected for preparation of a community profile of the Forest of Dean area in Gloucestershire (Powell 1992) for use by the Area Collegiate Board (an LEA-supported grouping including the college principal and head teachers) included a combination of both information on the local labour market and a range of social information.

Information analysed for the 1992 Forest of Dean community profile included:

- general age distribution in 10 year bands (derived from Office of Population Census and Surveys (OPCS) census data);
- school-age population by year, classified by gender, for 1981, 1989 and 1990, together with projections to the year 2000 (provided by the Education Department Research and Information Section);
- data on social class derived from OPCS classification of the head of the household, membership of socio-economic group and status of tenure of dwelling (provided by the County Council Planning Department);
- population by parish (census-based, updated annually, provided by the County Council Planning Department although in other less rural settings it might be more appropriate to collect population data by ward);
- the incidence of lone-parent families and of car ownership (from County Council Planning Department);
- the current labour market position (derived from OPCS census and provided by the County Council Planning Department, although there are confidentiality constraints on the use of annual census of employment data);

- data on unemployment levels in the travel-to-work area (published monthly by the Employment Department and provided through the County Council Planning Department);
- distribution of employment by sector, including a breakdown by gender (from the County Council Planning Department);
- location of workplace of economically active residents, so as to identify the proportion of residents working outside the area (from the County Council Planning Department);
- destination of year 11 pupils attending schools in the area, by gender, categorised into full-time education, full-time employment, YT, registered unemployed (published annually by the County Careers Service);
- data on those entering full-time work by employment sector, and those whose job includes a formal training element (published annually by the County Careers Service).

(A copy of the document can be obtained from Jacqui Buffton, Education Officer – Post-16, Shire Hall, Gloucester GL1 2TP, price £2.50 inc. postage.)

It was felt that information on the social infrastructure would complement and contextualise the more traditional LLMI and inform college management's decision-making on the curriculum to be offered. The intention in Gloucestershire is to add additional information on ethnicity, transport patterns etc. as it is collected. The intention is for each collegiate board to produce a handbook of key facts and figures which is then updated on a regular basis, ideally annually. The recent exercise was able to take account of data released from the OPCS National Census; fundamental review of the community profile is planned on release of future decennial census data.

Analysing the data

Any examination of the make-up of the locality served by a college is likely to highlight particular groupings within the catchment area. This will then need to be matched against the college enrolment profile generated by an analysis of FESR student data. Such a comparison will identify groups not being reached, who in turn form new markets for the college.

Whether the community is grouped according to population type (e.g. young mothers, the long-term unemployed, working class males), geographic area (residents of council estates, isolated rural hamlets) or work-related factors (small businesses, shift workers, agricultural employees), in all likelihood each segment will have specific needs. As such they can be regarded as 'communities within the community', and the extent to which current provision responds to their particular requirements can be analysed in isolation. Core data – whether on the locality as a whole, or a particular grouping – can be supplemented with specific research to develop a more detailed understanding of particular issues, for example a survey

of Asian women resident in particular postcode areas to identify their training needs. Colleges can use such information to target relevant groups through new curricula and/or specific approaches – e.g. outreach – and thus extend the customer base.

The core data for a community profile is readily available, and can be analysed rapidly: the 1992 Forest of Dean community profile was compiled by an external consultant working to a short contract. Other collegiate boards in Gloucestershire have undertaken the task directly or sub-contracted a college marketing unit to collect and analyse the required data. Elsewhere it might be appropriate to commission the county or borough planning department to undertake the exercise, or to recruit community-based agencies or teams of community members to conduct field enquiries. In rural settings, the Rural Development Agency has developed expertise in carrying out village appraisals which cover a range of publicly used services (including public transport, post offices and pubs). Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) has developed a computer programme which can customise questionnaire-based enquiries targeted at village residents and analyse responses.

Using the information

Information collected can be used to relate existing provision and services to current college activity and inform the development of the strategic plan. The important element here is the will of the college management team to take the findings seriously and to act on them within a defined timescale. The findings will undoubtedly reveal marketing opportunities which need to be addressed in the operating statements of development plans. Findings might:

- inform the policy process, with information on gaps in provision leading to a review of the college mission;
- alert the college to the need for new forms of provision;
- inform the drawing up of an action plan to address the education and training implications of, for example, impending large-scale redundancy;
- draw attention to instances where the college might develop applications for external funding to address specific areas of need;
- identify options for college development and facilitate the prioritisation of work within current funding limits.

Any community profiling exercise will only have meaning if it results in action of the type identified being undertaken. It is not an end in itself, but a tool to be employed in the refinement of institutional purpose and the development of strategic plans.

Asserting values: prioritising work and institutional positioning

Public sector funding of incorporated colleges, whether from FEFC, Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) or LEA sources, stems from tax contributions. Any college which, through its strategic positioning, fails to address the learning needs of all local tax payers – individual and corporate – will come to be regarded as an undemocratic institution.

The local community will perceive the value position adopted by the college in the actions the college takes in response to the information it has collected on the local socio-economic infrastructure. Identification of under-recruitment from ethnic minority community residents, for example, will only lead to a targeting of resources to develop salient provision if the institution's leadership, at governing body and senior management level, believes that it is part of the college's role in the community to identify and redress social inequity. A college's public mission statement will *de facto* advertise the value frame within which it operates to the communities it seeks to serve: 'an express statement of institutional purpose will reveal to staff, students and other clients of the college the ethos of the institution and its values' (FEU undated).

College strategy papers will identify particular communities that the college regards as priority market segments. Whether they be identified by grouping (the college seeks to redress disadvantage experienced by members of the local community) or economic sector (the college aims to develop a positive relationship with industry, commerce, public and private sector bodies, and the professions), these targets themselves reflect a set of values which will determine the extent to which the institution wishes to focus narrowly on particular market segments, or relate to the community, and its sub-communities, as a whole. Only a baseline of hard evidence on local need will permit a college to make such strategic (and value laden) choices.

Colleges, we argue, should therefore position themselves to respond both to employment-related demand and the individual and group learning needs of community residents. The strength of the college is that it is one of the few local public sector organisations that has the facilities to respond to both. With the will to do so, and the information on where to target resources, the college becomes the powerful focus of continuing education and training opportunities for its community.

Successful corporate institutions will be those that know, understand and respond to their local community's learning needs. Student enrolments increase, college viability is assured, and social inequity is confronted.

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Chapter 4: More and different: funding regimes and community FE

Alan Tuckett
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The government's policy of expansion for the FE sector is admirable and welcome, but it disguises a fundamental problem which needs to be addressed.

FE managers committed to serving communities will doubtless be keen to endorse increased participation as both necessary to socio-economic wellbeing and beneficial to institutional viability, but for them, 'growth' in itself is an insufficient focus. They recognise that a move to a mass further education system means not only more students, but different ones. As a consequence, they believe that the funding treatment of part-time learners, the definition of and reward for 'success', and the recruitment of students from particular groups traditionally under-represented in FE are core concerns.

Those with a community FE focus ask not just 'how many?', but 'who participates?' and increasingly 'who succeeds?'.

The case for mass participation

The economic case for mass participation in education and training has been rehearsed in a series of recent policy statements and publications (Ball 1990, Cassels 1990, Council for Industry and Higher Education 1992, Employment Department 1988, Layard *et al.* 1992, NIACE 1993, Training Agency 1989, TUC 1989). All have argued that the British workforce is less skilled and less flexible than its international competitors: it is 'under-educated, under-trained and under-qualified' (CBI 1989). Forces as diverse as market pressure for product innovation, more sophisticated customer demand and expectation of high quality, and the speed of continuing technological change all require 'UK plc' to invest in education and training for future economic survival. The World Economic Forum cites the United Kingdom as 20th out of 22 countries on the ability of its education system to meet the needs of international competition in the 1990s (Davies 1992), and it is already clear that the UK has little hope of meeting the national education and

training targets for lifetime learning unless a major expansion of provision for adult learners can be stimulated.

Expansion and equity

Cassels (1990) argues persuasively that Britain's economic success depends on recruiting into skilled work those groups in the adult community which are at present inclined to remain outside formal education and training, and who are under-represented in much of the employment market. Community educators have targeted many of these groups over the last 20 years: among them black people, many women, working class people, people with disabilities, people with basic skills difficulties, speakers of languages other than English, and unemployed people. These groups of potential adult learners are under-represented in many colleges or, where present, are to be found in disproportionate numbers on low-level courses. Provision for them will have to be addressed both for reasons of equity and also because mass participation simply cannot be achieved while they are neglected. They will, through a combination of personal and employment-related circumstances, be unable to study full-time, and will often participate discontinuously: provision for those outside the traditional FE clientele will need to be part-time, conveniently located, flexible and modular. Such provision must be encouraged by any funding regime designed to promote large-scale expansion of the sector.

Recruitment of additional part-time students is not in itself sufficient. It will be vital that they are also successful, gaining usable skills, knowledge and competence which empowers them to contribute positively to the economy and to society. This means that colleges will need to identify and respond to individual learning needs, placing students on appropriate courses, providing (often expensive) on-programme support and defining achievable satisfactory outcomes. 'Success' will not necessarily be the attainment of a full qualification; rather, units of learning will need to be accredited and, where external agencies have yet to develop certification, colleges will need to negotiate a set of learning goals against which individuals' performance can be assessed and recognised. 'New' FE students must not be discriminated against at exit any more than at entry.

All this will have cost implications. National and local funding agencies – training and enterprise councils (TECs) and local authorities as well as the FEFC – and colleges will need to recognise in their fiscal mechanisms the distinctive and often additional costs of recruitment, learning support, assessing and accrediting achievement in respect of previously non-participant learners. It will, for example, be more complex if the student has previous qualifications and substantial employment experience gained abroad in a country whose qualifications are not recognised here than in assessing the experience of a student straight from school.

An inherent tension between increased participation and equity can be seen in the first year of work by TECs. Offered contracts by the Employment Department which tied funding to narrow performance criteria – completed whole National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) – TECs were faced with a crude choice. Either:

- seek to maximise funding by targeting trainees who needed the least additional value to be added to complete an NVQ (thereby minimising recruitment of slow learners, or those wishing to take units of different NVQs) – so-called 'creaming off'; or
- seek to meet the training needs of all the people in their areas, recruiting trainees without regard to the cost required to bring them to the desired outcome – and thereby possibly compromise TEC training budgets and their future viability.

The choice, essentially, was one between institutional and public service values: guaranteed short-term survival or promotion of the future well-being of the whole community.

Conservatism and institutional initiative

So what choices confront those who fall within the FEFC orbit? The short-term prospect appears far from radical. In line with the FE White Paper (**Education and training for the 21st century** DES *et al.* 1991), part of recurrent funding will be distributed on the basis of throughput. All colleges and 'external institutions' have been offered a five per cent increase in funds in response to an eight per cent expansion in student numbers, with more to come in the next three years: few have declined the offer. For the interim period to August 1994 the FEFC will provide £750 flat-rate for each additional full-time student enrolled (FEFC 1992). It looks as though we're in for a period of retrenchment.

It speaks well of the past creativity of institutional managers and the determination of teaching staff that so much has been achieved to broaden participation despite largely unsympathetic funding arrangements and a climate of strong demand which could have led people to rest on their laurels. When enrolment is buoyant but resources static, it is not easy to foster adult and part-time access, and in particular to cater for unusual, 'difficult' or expensive students. Flexible provision, outreach activity, accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL), guidance and counselling, language support, signers, childcare services – all these and more have been provided to facilitate uptake from those who have hitherto regarded education as 'not for us' (McGivney 1990). These qualitative changes are no doubt amongst the chief reasons for the dramatic change in the FE student profile over the last decade, with adults now constituting an absolute majority of participants (see **Figure 1**).

Figure 1: Student enrolments in further education colleges England, November 1991

Age	below 18	18–20	21–24	25+	Total
Enrolments (rounded, in millions)	0.5	0.3	0.2	1.0	2.0
Percentage	23	17	10	51	100

(source: Further Education Statistical Record.
Taken from **Education for adults in further education colleges: 1991–92. A report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate**)

But faced with a funding regime – albeit temporary – which specifically rewards the recruitment of young full-timers, colleges will lose momentum to recruit from the non-participant population. Already the recession has damaged part-time enrolments. While full-time work has burgeoned (up 10 per cent in the 1980s), the number of part-timers fell by three per cent in the years 1989/90–1990/91 (DfE 1992). We need support to halt the drift, not encouragement to exacerbate it.

One factor in the achievements of the 1980s and early '90s must be the flexibility – to spend money well, and to target particular needs – which was available to colleges. This will surely continue. Under any future funding methodology for the sector, colleges will remain by and large free to allocate their externally-provided, single-line budgets in ways which accord with their internal priorities. As section 19(3) of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 indicates:

> A further education corporation may provide facilities of any description appearing to the corporation to be necessary or desirable for the purposes of or in connection with carrying on any activities undertaken in the exercise of their principal powers.

If there's a will, funding can be targeted internally. In the short-term, therefore, equity can continue to be addressed through local initiative. However, in the medium- and longer-term, the achievement of the critical goal of mass participation necessitates system-wide funding arrangements to support and steer institutions to open up FE, and in particular to encourage recruitment from sectors of the population which have until now been unresponsive to, or overlooked by the service on offer.

Key features of a community-sensitive funding regime

A new national funding regime should be able 'to secure changes in the nature and scale of provision by colleges' (FEFC 1992). The FEFC's document **Funding learning** (FEFC 1992) has provided a framework for the sector as a whole to re-examine the necessary ingredients of a resource-allocation model which encourages mass participation. The funding councils – and, using centrally allocated funding, colleges – will need equity-sensitive funding mechanisms at input and output level, to secure adequately resourced support services on the one hand, and some reward for institutions (and cost-centres) which succeed in changing participation patterns and securing positive outcomes for non-standard students on the other. We therefore believe it is imperative that, both nationally and at institutional level, approaches to funding adopted for the late 1990s include certain key features:

- a method of resourcing the full cost of part-time provision;
- recognition of the differential costs associated with provision for specific client groups;
- differentiating the costs associated with different programme elements;
- an approach to the setting of fees and concessions which does not skew participation towards those who can pay most.

Resourcing part-time provision

Of all the issues to be tackled, none is more significant for its impact on participation than the securing of equitable funding for part-time provision. Inequitable resourcing must be remedied for three main reasons. Firstly, to address effectively the huge adult market for FE. Secondly, it must be remedied if FE is to be provided efficiently, for the part-time route is one of proven cost-effectiveness. Thirdly, inequitable resourcing must be tackled if colleges are to continue to develop and offer a flexible curriculum with open learning, mix-and-match programmes, APEL and assessment on demand, incidentally making 'part-time' a very inadequate descriptor for a kaleidoscope of 'non-full-time' opportunities.

To assume that costs of provision, or elements of total provision, are – in relation to fixed costs – likely to be the same for all modes of attendance is inadequate. The indication in **Funding learning** (FEFC 1992) that 'factors usually assigned to part-time modes of attendance understate the costs incurred by colleges in making such provision and therefore discriminate against it in favour of provision for full-time students' at least acknowledges the existence of a problem, but anecdotal evidence suggests that this problem is rapidly becoming a crisis as the combined impact of the recession on part-time enrolments, the FEFC bonus for full-time recruits, and the inadequate return to colleges for part-time students combine to lead some colleges to consider 'opting out' of part-time provision for commercial reasons.

Some time ago, Mee and Wiltshire (1978) suggested that it may well be more appropriate to consider as distinctive 'modes' those who study part-time, those who undertake substantial study (eight hours or more per week) in their spare time, and those engaged in flexible study patterns, rather than allocate funds on the time of day study is undertaken. But the key feature is the 'weight' (we are tempted to say the 'value') given to part-time study. An approach to full-time equivalent (FTE) calculations based solely on class contact hours – as has been the case to date – fails to acknowledge the non-teaching costs associated with part-time and/or adult learners. Alternatively, it has meant that the level of service offered to part-timers is inadequate: hence HMI have been able to observe recently that 'part-time students often receive less help than is available to full-time students; evening students rarely see anyone other than their part-time teacher' (HMI 1993). This historic propensity to bestow 'second class' status on anyone other than a full-time, fully-costed student is a recipe for early drop-out or failure. Thus any approach to funding based on full-time equivalents or on different modes of attendance must recognise that the costs associated with outreach, guidance, initial assessment and APEL, on-course support (in study skills and in personal support, including childcare) and off-course guidance are proportionately higher in respect of those able to attend only on a part-time basis.

Client groups

The Funding Council has publicly acknowledged that 'colleges cater for a wide variety of needs in the populations they serve', that 'some needs in particular are associated with certain sections of the population or client groups', and that 'meeting the needs of these groups may impose different costs on colleges'. 'There is therefore a case for considering differential funding.' (FEFC 1992) We concur.

There will, of course, be arguments about which groups merit special attention. Following the 1988 Education Reform Act clarification that provision for adult learners was integral to further education in law, the then Department of Education and Science suggested that programmes in addition to those relating to vocational areas (second chance education, including access courses; basic education, including literacy and numeracy; non-course provision) should be included in LEA further education funding formulae (DES 1989). This advice reflects the fact that the cost of provision for many adult students is in addition to costs related to the nature of the subject studied. There is a view that adult learners *per se* do not merit differential funding (FEFC 1992). This in our opinion stems from too great a focus on adults who do now participate, and the level of service offered to them. If, as we argue, the FE sector needs to become even more populated by adults, colleges will need to enhance their services to mature learners (personal tutorials,

for example, are almost exclusively confined to young, full-time students) and be confident that a national funding regime will supply them with adequate funding to offset the costs incurred.

To reach and support adults from under-participating groups is an even more expensive business. There is evidence that it can be done successfully, but at a cost (Cassels 1990, McGivney 1990 and Sargant 1991); even those making the argument against generalised extra funding for adults accept that the additional costs resulting from lower staff:student ratios in basic education merit 'appropriate weighting' (FEFC 1992). Other client groups for whom provision is likely to carry an additional expense include those with learning difficulties and disabilities; those from low-income groups (although here the difficulties could in part be addressed by fee/concessions policies); those who have particular need of support on account of their lack of confidence or motivation; and those following mainstream courses but with specific language support needs.

We contend that, rather than leaving colleges to recruit from such groupings as they think appropriate – for, understandably, some colleges may wish to address 'easier' markets – specific incentives should be provided to recruit such students. The now defunct Inner London Education Authority's affirmative action strategy provides an example. Top-up funding was awarded on the basis of evidence that London's polytechnics were successful in recruiting rising numbers of working-class, black or disabled students into programmes, and women into curriculum areas where they were under-represented. ILEA rewarded success in year A with payment in year B; the FEFC's introduction of the further education early student statistics form will, in future, allow rewards for targeted recruitment to be allocated in the same year as results are achieved. To borrow this mechanism for application to colleges there will need to be reliable and standardised data about students, covering gender, age, ethnicity, location by postcode (to pick up data about socio-economic reach), and by registered disability, and data about the wider populations served by institutions. Funding bodies would need to take key decisions in apportioning different values to different categories of student.

Programme elements

Perhaps the most imaginative of recent ideas is that the funding method should reflect the process of learning within colleges. We heartily endorse the proposition that distinct funding should be attributed to 'entry', 'on programme' and 'exit' phases of the learning programme, not least because the approach would render a national credit accumulation and transfer system based on a standard unit-based currency all the more necessary.

Any approach to funding by programme element, however, needs to be undertaken multi-dimensionally. To allocate units of resource to the three phases on the basis

of 'programme' and 'mode' is in itself insufficiently sensitive to pick up the additional costs involved in targeting new students (thus securing expansion) and giving them an opportunity to succeed (thus generating an outcome-related payment). The cost to colleges of dealing with previous non-participant learners also needs to be addressed directly. One simple option – specific enhancement of funding for provision for 'new participants' – would give the opportunity for necessary weighting to be applied, but would be inappropriate alongside other subject-based groupings and is, in any case, too general a classification to account for the range of costs associated with recruiting specific groups. Rather, a third axis, aligned (as we have argued above) to 'client group', needs to be added to trigger funding commensurate with college targeting of non-participant learners, as identified in development plans. The approach would then become truly strategic and community sensitive, with funding allocated to attract, provide for and certificate specific types of student rather than to make certain provision. This model – a development of the matrix advanced by Andy Hawkins as a response to the Education Reform Act (Hawkins 1988) – would add a level of complexity to resource distribution. Without it, however, there is no clear mechanism whereby institutional activity designed to expand participation in a targeted way can be funded, let alone rewarded.

It will be important that the exit stage element of funding is strongly weighted to prompt colleges not only to recruit, but also to promote successful completion by new clients. For many learners, as **Funding learning** (FEFC 1992) acknowledges, the achievement of a full qualification is likely to be inappropriate; success, and thus the trigger for payment to colleges, needs to be interpreted multi-dimensionally in terms of qualification, entry into/return to employment, career advancement, enrolment in further study or completion of agreed (albeit uncertificated) learning objectives.

Fees

Fees have a major impact on take-up. Evidence from adult education suggests fee increases may not lead to a cut in overall participation, but do change the pattern of who participates. High fee regimes exclude people from disadvantaged sectors of society, but fail to discourage affluent, middle-class students. Expansion of previously untapped markets by the new FE sector is likely to be compromised unless those less able to pay the cost of study are supported through concessions and discretionary awards. Fee concession policy is in future in the hands of colleges. Colleges are public corporations, and as such need to keep central the notion of commitment to the public interest. The FEFC's execution of its statutory responsibility to secure adequate FE provision could be questioned if colleges were to introduce policies which restricted participation through high course fees.

A direction from the Funding Council to this effect might become necessary if there is no self-regulation by colleges.

Student support

Even with appropriate supply-side funding mechanisms, demand for FE will not increase dramatically unless potential learners are financially supported to study. HMI are surely right when they observe that 'future funding policies need to consider both the costs of provision itself and the funding required to enable those for whom it is intended to participate' (HMI 1993).

While the funding of students is not a primary responsibility of colleges, it impacts directly on college performance, and achievement of the institutional mission. This can be seen in the pressure on college access funds, or in Lancashire colleges when, in 1992, a combination of cuts in discretionary grants and a continuing refusal by most DSS offices in the county to operate the '21 hour rule' led to major difficulties for their extensive access and return-to-study programmes. Colleges, too, have a direct part to play: for as long as discretionary awards remain a distinct budget – whether placed with LEAs or elsewhere – colleges will need to set fees at a level which will not discourage award bodies from supporting as large a number of students a possible; the higher the fee which has to be paid, the fewer the students who can be supported from a limited budget.

The most effective contribution government can make to expand participation is to change the funding regime for individuals and for institutions to eradicate the disincentive to part-time participation (NIACE 1989, 1990, 1993; Tuckett 1991). However, to cover the full costs of post-compulsory study would prove prohibitively expensive and the UK already provides higher volumes of income support to students than other industrial societies. We need to foster not only more investment by government, but also by employers and individuals (Ball 1991). Such investment can have disproportionately positive results, as can be seen from the success of recently-introduced employee development programmes – Ford EDAP, Rover Learning Business *et al.* – in spurring workers to participate, often for the first-time, in formal study through the availability of small-scale individual funding support from employers.

In **Learning by right** (1990), David Miliband outlined an imaginative proposal for a legislative entitlement of five days' (30 hours) education and training per year for all people between 16 and 65 who are outside full-time education. The entitlement would be backed by cash-limited government funding to supplement employers' existing and expanded training budgets, and individuals would be entitled to accumulate their entitlement. Any existing validated training provided by an employer and agreed by an employee would count, but the onus would be that the learning entitlement would foster choice by the individual, mediated only

by advisers who would approve the education/training undertaken. Other initiatives are possible, and at relatively little cost to the national purse. Individuals' investment in learning could be boosted by extending the 1991 Finance Act tax remission for study leading to NVQs to a universal benefit. The funds currently available for student support – targeted, in the main, on HE – need to be shared more fairly between part-time and full-time students, in further as well as higher education. Without such measures the FE sector is unlikely to find the additional students needed to satisfy government calls for expansion.

Conclusion

Post-Education Reform Act, FTE-based 'bums on seats' approaches to funding, or crude 'payment by results' mechanisms, will fail to allow public sector providers of education and training to play their necessary part in the achievement of national targets for lifetime learning. Yet the country needs more and different learners. Many will prove more expensive to teach, but freshly-motivated new learners potentially provide better value for money, as employee development programmes demonstrate. There will undoubtedly be pressures to improve productivity; nonetheless, colleges and 'external institutions' must be resourced to attract, provide for and certificate new learners who are unlikely to be able to study full-time, and to develop a wide battery of teaching and learning strategies attuned to mass participation. All funding agencies – including the HEFCs, TECs and local authorities as well as the FEFCs – need to find ways in which uptake from the local community can be expanded and broadened.

Local strategies will be most effective in tackling local challenges, and funding mechanisms adopted at the centre must encourage, not inhibit, effective local planning. College managers have previously enjoyed, and will continue to have flexibility in the way centrally-allocated funds are deployed locally. They need to exercise that flexibility sensitively. It will be vital for providers in all sectors to make funding regimes stretch to fit the needs of real learners – and for colleges to ensure they develop as institutions which engage with the full range of the communities of interest, geography, culture and need that they exist to serve. A system-wide priority will only be given to the expansion of community-sensitive further education if providers are rewarded for their effectiveness in serving a wider range of students.

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Section C: Delivering the goods

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Chapter 5: Taking education and training into the community: East Birmingham College

Bob Addey

Editor's note:
An earlier version of this article appeared as a chapter (entitled 'Providing training access points') in ***Vocational education and the adult unwaged: developing a learning culture*** *(Jenny Hunt and Heather Jackson 1992, Kogan Page) and is reproduced here with the permission of the copyright holder.*

Imagine that your college has a catchment area that includes some of the most deprived inner-city neighbourhoods in Britain yet, perversely, your main site is both geographically and culturally marginal to many of the local communities in greatest need.

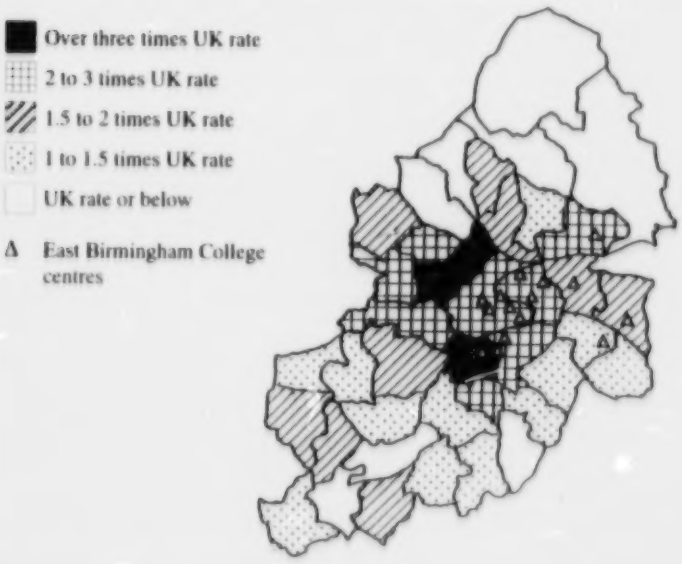
No problem if the college has no commitment to community service; but East Birmingham College does have that commitment. It is located on the eastern outskirts of Birmingham, with a number of deprived inner-city areas (including Small Heath, Saltley and Washwood Heath) on its doorstep:

> Small Heath, Saltley and Washwood Heath form a band of deprivation which is ranked in the worst 2.5 per cent in the country. 90 per cent of electoral districts in the UK are less deprived than the inner-city parts of East Birmingham (Department of the Environment 1989).
> (See also **Figure 2**)

A large proportion of inhabitants are from the Indian sub-continent, primarily Pakistani but with an increasing number from Bangladesh. In 1981, the four wards around the college's main site had ethnic minority populations of between 2.1 per cent and 4.5 per cent. The four neighbouring wards as you moved into the city had comparable figures of between 21.7 per cent and 50.8 per cent.

Inner-city local authority wards experience both the highest absolute numbers, and highest rates of unemployment. The rates for the wards covered by East Birmingham College's inner-city centres are: Small Heath (30.3 per cent),

Figure 2: Unemployment rates in Birmingham (by ward)


Over three times UK rate
2 to 3 times UK rate
1.5 to 2 times UK rate
1 to 1.5 times UK rate
UK rate or below
Δ East Birmingham College centres

(Birmingham rate 18.8%, UK rate 12.2%)

Washwood Heath (25.6 per cent) and Sparkbrook (38.1 per cent), compared with an average Birmingham MDC rate of 18.8 per cent (Birmingham City Council Economic Development Department 1993).

Educational disadvantage is also marked:

> 74 per cent of the Asian mothers had received no formal education and 71 per cent were illiterate in their own language. 83 per cent of the Asian mothers were not fluent in English and 90 per cent stated that they required an interpreter to communicate fully with English speakers. (Dance and Hughes 1987)

Developing a policy of local delivery

In the late 1980s, it became college policy to take education and training 'into the community' to serve the needs of all age and ethnic groups within east Birmingham. The method was to set up centres to deliver new courses and to resite existing provision to make it more attractive to the target groups.

The seeds of the approach were sown in 1985 when an adult training unit was established in an inner-city area. That was shortly followed, in 1987, by a joint LEA/college initiative to set up a community education centre in Parkfield – an old, cold and dirty ex-secondary school. Such was the pressure on the council to house the rapidly rising school-age population that the downstairs was pressed into service as a junior and infant school. The college occupied the upstairs and a deal was struck with a local community programme provider, anxious for ESoL (English for speakers of other languages) support from the college, to use the centre for a painting and decorating project. Teaching and support staff scrubbed floors and knocked down walls and the result was a pleasant centre specialising in business administration and child care for adults. The success of Parkfield led to the establishment of similar school centres designed to cater for the needs of parents and the immediate local community.

At the Bordesley Green Centre (a run-down, disused YTS site), a local Employment Training manager was persuaded to winter his builders there to carry out extensive building work whilst the college provided training leading to City and Guilds qualifications. Despite the paucity of funds, the centre was made very accessible to students with disabilities. It now offers courses in carpentry and joinery, picture framing, ESoL, computing, adult basic education (ABE), and houses a number of Employment Service-funded programmes.

This kind of approach led to local interest and later, interest from funding organisations attracted by success. There had been no master plan. Rather, the college committed itself to developing in the inner-city. It appointed a programme area leader for adult training and community education, and the principal (born and brought up in east Birmingham) showed substantial support. Little funding was available, but the college management was ready to give dedicated staff a free hand and to back initiative, responsiveness and creativity. The initial achievements at centres like Parkfield and Bordesley Green had the twin effect of gaining community respect and pulling in external finance.

By the summer of 1991, 14 centres had been developed in either free-standing units or in partnership with host organisations including schools, a mosque and a leisure centre, covering a wide geographical area and client group and offering a range of provision that included ABE and ESoL, motor vehicle engineering, office skills, garment design and manufacture, computing, carpentry and joinery, caring, general education and courses for bi-lingual classroom assistants. Later additions have included courses in business and management up to degree standard, and more higher education courses will be developed through franchises with local universities, enabling local degrees to be marketed to local people.

While originating as a pragmatic way of tackling the needs of local communities by using existing sites, the project developed into a planned network of centres

covering the whole of the college's catchment and, rather than being based on a single programme area, became a cross-college initiative. Thus by 1990, as part of its development plan, the college adopted a mission target of delivering 20 per cent of its curriculum within the inner-city centres by 1992. This was achieved by 1991 and figures from the 1992 enrolments indicate that 25 per cent of the college students are taught entirely within these centres.

Most of the centres do have a main focus, such as motor vehicle engineering at Henley Street, business and management at St Peter's, and textile design at Golden Hillock, but all act as access and guidance centres adding to the college's marketing base. Two of the centres have been equipped with public access databases to provide instant information on demand regarding educational and training opportunities in the area, and further programmes are available to assist with career choices. All the centres have been designed for adult use and are clearly identifiable as self-contained college premises enabling year-round usage. Efforts are made to ensure that all student support services are offered on all sites and that the staffing reflects the needs of the clients in terms of ethnic origin and gender, with many of the staff being multi-lingual and trained in counselling skills. The college has now gained BS 5750 and staff are continually looking to provide a better service by monitoring and evaluating existing courses through established quality procedures and by responding quickly to demand.

Funding, networking and partnership

The resources and courses within the centres have been funded in a variety of ways but it is notable that the proactive approach of the college has attracted funding to enhance the physical resources of the centres to a high standard in the first instance, and only later to develop new provision. Some of the courses are traditional further education that would have been delivered on the main college site but have now moved to the inner-city centres and these are being funded by FEFC. For others, the funding is negotiated through other agencies, particularly Birmingham TEC Ltd. Some provision has been supported through the European Social Fund, Birmingham Heartlands initiatives and the East Birmingham Task Force. Many of the courses are vocational with built-in language support to meet the needs of the adult Asian community and there has been considerable success with employer-led recruitment compacts. The college also runs courses under the Employment Services-funded Options (Restart) programme in English and community languages, and holds a contract to run similarly funded Jobplan courses.

The new centres have attracted the attention of local schools, Social Services, and institutions such as local hospitals, all of whom have asked the college to arrange training packages for their students/trainees. One fruitful outcome from these arrangements involves a local adult training centre which works with people who

have severe learning difficulties. The trainees provide catering services in a number of college centres. This involvement has proved a first-rate tool for integration, and as the trainees attend day release classes in the college, they are also achieving NVQ accreditation.

Networking and partnerships have been encouraged by the city council in Birmingham and the college has responded positively to this. This has meant joint marketing ventures such as an audio cassette (one side English, one side Urdu) professionally produced with the assistance of the local BBC radio station. This was distributed free within the community promoting education and training possibilities with all local providers and using one of the college centres as the central information point.

Another working example was a Birmingham City Council/Birmingham TEC Ltd jointly-funded pilot project called Prospects where the college was the access point for a programme involving the participation of four training managers actively to encourage the recruitment of local people into education and training. This programme has now gone city-wide based on the local network model and is called the Step Programme. In east Birmingham this involves partnerships between the college and adult education, private training providers, the local library service, voluntary and community groups, and the careers service, with the college managing the contract and providing co-ordination and administration. The programme is open to the unemployed, unwaged, and low-skilled part-time employees and provides an entitlement of 90 hours' training that could include counselling, guidance, vocational and educational tasters, ABE and ESoL assessment and on-going support. At the present time, it is delivered by nine different organisations offering 49 tasters and recruited through eight access centres with 300 to 400 participants at any given time.

The benefits of local delivery

The outcomes of the college's community education and training venture have been that:

- the college's profile within the local community has been raised;
- the college is seen positively as a deliverer of education and training which cares about the needs of its customers and clients;
- the college is trusted by the community and also by other education and training providers in the area, thereby creating the climate for further partnerships and networking relationships;
- more adults from the local community are taking up education and training opportunities and following progression routes to higher qualifications (where appropriate).

Younger people are also increasingly using neighbourhood provision. 'East Birmingham has a higher proportion of pre-school children than the national average (7.9 per cent compared with 6.5 per cent).' (WMRHA 1988) The rise in the birth rate led to the local authority opening a number of infant and junior schools in the area in marked contrast to other areas of the city. The development of local centres means that the college is now well-positioned to serve the growing population of ethnic minority youngsters of college age in its catchment.

The end of outreach?

A venture that began as a largely reactive response to the needs of the long-term unemployed and unwaged, many of whom had difficulties with the English language, within one inner-city area, has now developed into a proactive plan to ensure the continued interaction between the college, its partners, and the communities it serves into the 21st century. The success of the venture can be measured in the demands for staff and space: at certain times, these cannot be met as the centres are full. It can also be measured in terms of penetration of the inner city communities. Today, ethnic minority participation in the college is 38 per cent, a figure dramatically higher than that which would have resulted from serving the immediate vicinity of the college's main site.

The college has gained national recognition for its policy, and post-incorporation college expansion plans for the next three years give the centres a significant role which may result in additions to their numbers.

The approach has meant that 'outreach' has become an increasingly irrelevant concept: the kind of distance that it implies no longer reflects the position of East Birmingham College.

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Chapter 6: Serving communities that lose their livelihoods: the miners of South Wales

Colin Trotman
and
Hywel Francis

> *Close a Pit, Kill a Community*
> *Cau Pwll, Lladd Cymuned*
> (NUM, South Wales Area slogan, 1984–85 strike)

Defining community

Class and community are the same in many mining regions in Britain. At least that is how it appears, especially during periods of deep social and economic crises, as in 1926, 1972, 1974, 1984-85 and now, 1992-93. Indeed, in one of the last essays written by Raymond Williams he remarked upon the special meaning of key words such as culture, democracy and community in those mining areas where solidarity was strongest in 1984-85, notably South Wales (Williams 1985).

Those of us who have been born into and shaped by these kinds of communities, and who now try to serve such communities as educators, have recently gone through a learning process of our own. Rooted in the recent accelerated industrial decline of the coalfields, where the old male work and labourist cultures have been confronted by the possibility of their own demise, the consequent learning processes for our communities and ourselves within them need analysing. Put differently, steps have been taken in recent times to confront the social reality of a dying work culture beyond the sentimentality of a well meaning BBC documentary and to explore the grass roots, collectivist resources of hope which continue to exist within valley communities (Francis 1991).

The educational responses described in this chapter are not necessarily unique to South Wales, nor are they necessarily new: they are indeed universal in the social action values which have inspired them. In these new times in further and higher education such values need to be re-affirmed in terms of linking the education of adults to community survival and development.

Identifying problems and solutions

The collapse of the coal industry as a major employer was traumatic on a personal, family, community, valley and regional level. It was also compounded by the psychological problem of finality. The valleys had been built on coal: what was there beyond coal? It was, therefore, adult educators who confronted a multi-faceted problem in an era when the enterprise culture emphasised student individualism rather than mutual support.

In recognising that there were disadvantaged individuals and communities, the problem of designing a 'needs based' strategy was more to do with the gap between such people and the institutional and ideological time-warp of further and higher education. It is a distance of history, culture and experience. As a starting point, if educationalists wished to address needs then their provision had to be negotiable and had to be located in the community. The emerging strategy for those educators committed to social action in the valleys focused on partnership, guidance and progression.

Democratic partnerships

In the last desperate weeks of the 1984-85 miners' strike a small article appeared in The Valleys' Star (weekly newsletter of the Neath, Dulais and Swansea Valleys Miners' Support Group). It announced the formation of the DOVE (Dulais Opportunity for Voluntary Enterprise) workshop by members of the local women's support group. Committed to educational and training opportunities for women, it drew on the recent struggles to defend local jobs and communities and the experiences of some of them in the wider women's, labour and peace movements. The ethos was one of partnership using expertise and resources in local government, colleges, universities, the WEA (Workers Education Association), and community/voluntary organisations such as Miners' Welfare halls. But it was also distinctive in that it asserted the needs of women: childcare and transport support were deemed priorities because of low incomes, geographical remoteness and perhaps most of all the need to assert personal independence in communities where the nuclear family can at the same time be supportive and inadvertently oppressive.

DOVE was symptomatic of many local responses which remained localised. However, the need for wider links was compelling as problems grew with the acceleration of pit closures. The Valleys Initiative for Adult Education (VIAE) was created in 1988 to bring together all those institutions and organisations – statutory and voluntary – which were committed to linking adult education to the revival and development of valley communities (Francis 1987 and Reynolds and Francis 1989).

In less than five years, VIAE – initially a response to the collapse of the coal industry – has grown into an effective network which not only responds to crisis situations such as a pit closure, but performs an advocacy role locally, in Wales and in Europe. Its strategy document, **Next step for the valleys** (VIAE 1990), whilst not providing a detailed plan of action, has provided an ideological framework which is rooted in collectivism, partnership and social action not unlike the thinking and commitment of Paulo Freire (1990), Myles Horton *et al.* (1990) and Gaventa *et al.* (1990). Its application has influenced and accelerated developments in guidance, access, open college networks, educational partnerships and negotiated progression – all of which lead to the concept of a Community University of the Valleys. One very encouraging development since the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act is the lead role now played by tertiary and further education colleges in VIAE's activities: notably Neath in the west and Pontypridd in the east. They bring with them a strong professional and local interest but also a recognition, not hitherto strongly articulated, of the desperate skills deficit in the valleys which the further education sector can best address, if properly resourced. These concerns have been recently expressed by a series of broad-based conferences on the future of the valleys, all of which were pre-figured by VIAE's pioneering work in the late 1980s (Morgan and Price 1992).

Such partnerships are built in moments of crisis. Miners' support groups were local, national and international alliances. VIAE was in some key senses an inheritor of the Wales Congress in Support of Mining Communities which defined Wales as a community in which such diverse bodies as the Welsh Language Society, trade unions and churches came together to defend the valleys' pits and communities. Interestingly, the NUM (South Wales Area) slogan at the head of this chapter linking pit closures with the death of a community, emanated with the Welsh Language Society.

Personal and community guidance

Such organisational structures, however localised, may seem very remote at the moment of personal crisis. Sometime., with barely a week to decide, miners and their families are disinclined to talk about their problems. Education appears very remote in such circumstances. An 'educator', arriving with a briefcase of access brochures at Abernant in 1988 or Blaenant in 1990 did not necessarily have a universally warm welcome. Nevertheless, the industrial tutors in the Department of Adult Continuing Education at University College Swansea had the advantage of having organised NUM educational courses since 1974.

The decline from the mid-1980s when over 20,000 were employed in the coalfield, to barely 1,000 in December 1992, meant a rapid shift of our work: from trade

union education for young lodge activists to personal guidance for redundant miners and their families.

Of course, pleas for community survival for those who have lost their livelihoods can seem patronising. Dignity begins with personal self-esteem which usually means work. If, however, personal guidance is informed by a wider concern for families, neighbours, in other words the 'community', then guidance can have a potent social action role. It is this underlying outlook which informed our guidance work and led ultimately in 1991 to the setting up of a guidance unit, supported by European funding, within the department. Such a unit was necessary, for the scale of the problem was considerable.

From 1985 to 1989 the average age of mine workers made redundant in South Wales dropped steadily to 34 years. By February 1989, the NUM (South Wales Area) claimed that the average age of miners made redundant at Cynheidre Colliery (West Wales) was as low as 32 years. The majority of older workers had left the industry in the 1985–87 period. It could be suggested that the needs and aspirations of this much younger generation of redundant miners were distinctly different from those who were deemed to have retired. Thus, it was plausible to suggest that a 34 year old ex-employee of British Coal would be actively seeking further full-time employment or further education.

Through negotiations with British Coal, impartial educational guidance was provided at each pit during the redundancy period. The enormity of such a task may be better appreciated by reference to the fact that in the Spring of 1989 closures became a bi-monthly event.

Ultimately guidance also became a partnership, crucially with the NUM and then eventually through VIAE, with all other relevant providers.

In retrospect, our response was influenced more by a sense of commitment than an understanding of the task to be undertaken. It became clear during our initial involvement (Abernant Colliery, workforce 500) that no single educational provider, irrespective of commitment, could successfully undertake such a task. In addition, educational guidance is a specialised area which calls for diverse interpersonal skills to accommodate all levels of inquiry. Therefore, to serve the interests of mineworkers in general, it was absolutely necessary to collaborate and network with all providers within specific geographical areas.

However, whilst such collaboration can be seen as essential, achievement of such an ideal required much patience and consumed valuable time. Nevertheless, by March 1990, the closure of Blaenant Colliery (West Glamorgan) was met by a united group of education providers, guidance agencies and vocational training groups. This network was representative of local LEAs, colleges of further education, LEA community education providers, higher education and Department

of Employment advice services. More importantly, all pre-closure meetings were attended and informed by officers of the local NUM branch. The practical understanding supplied by local union officials was essential to communicate a sense of the real issues as the workforce perceived them. Furthermore, it provided less informed, less experienced members of the network with a rapid induction course in the needs of redundant mineworkers.

Progression through education

The guidance approach is by its very nature progressive and raises new questions about negotiated provision. It is in fundamental conflict with an enterprise culture which informed British Coal Enterprise's (BCE) approach to redundancy.

For its part, BCE insisted that former employees could relocate in the sense of further employment, by utilising readily available skills previously acquired from within the coal industry. Alternatively, training would be provided under the existing Jobs and Career Change Scheme (JACCS). However, the direction and emphasis within the JACCS strategy was towards re-employment (any employment), rather than up-skilling, retraining or career change.

Moreover, such provision can be described as 'period specific': it occurred primarily during the period of closure, it was never 'needs based' and contained little evidence of guidance towards further education.

This re-employment driven response was inevitably restricted by a diminishing job market. It was narrow and limited in terms of its priorities and understanding of the longer-term needs of former employees. There appeared to be a notable absence of any notion of upward mobility in personal development through further/higher education or vocational qualification. BCE's perception of mineworkers' skills as transferable was tantamount to locating them permanently within their original job/skills category. Overall, the provision supplied by BCE was reminiscent of a process rather than a service. It has been criticised as a quick solution to a difficult problem with the employer's responsibility limited to that of relocation of ex-employees. In real terms employment relocation only succeeded in a minority of cases (Trotman and Lewis 1990).

What provision there was did not address the often dire needs of those individuals who were approaching the job market after lengthy service in one industry. Neither did it address the needs of a significant number of employees whose fundamental requirements were basic literacy and numeracy skills. In seeking further employment they were obviously hampered by severe educational disadvantages. There were always a number of mineworkers who relied heavily upon local union officers to handle everyday transactions requiring basic literacy or numeracy skills.

For the majority of mineworkers, whatever skills they acquired during secondary education could safely be assumed to have fallen into disuse. Thus the need for a refresher course for the majority and a specific basic skills course for the minority appeared to be a logical interpretation of individual needs. A distinct lack of self-confidence was identified as one of the more debilitating factors that hampered the personal development of long-term 'one industry' workers.

The particular needs identified through guidance of redundant mineworkers and the partnership approach, often inspired by women's community initiatives such as DOVE and VIAE, led ultimately to the need for a holistic approach. This required accredited community-based progression routes from return to learn or so-called leisure provision, ultimately through to access and higher education. The Community University of the Valleys is to be launched at the DOVE workshop in the Dulais Valley in the autumn of 1993.

The need for the best quality training and educational community-based provision has been recognised and is to be met. It will be achieved as a result of a collectivist belief that a genuine work culture can only be achieved through a vibrant and dynamic learning culture. The experiences in the South Wales valleys since the mid-1980s, despite the anger, sadness and personal anguish of defeat, have some worthwhile lessons in these new times. Democratic partnership, guidance and progression if seen as key criteria for a community-based educational strategy can bear fruit, even in difficult times (Francis 1992).

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Chapter 7: Mobilising communities for learning: the Sheffield Black Literacy Campaign

Ahmed Gurnah

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The beginnings

The Sheffield Black Literacy Campaign is remarkable for the way it mobilised black communities to tackle the major problem of literacy education.

The massive de-industrialisation that hit Sheffield in the 1980s exposed the real meaning of literacy for some black groups. In regions like Yorkshire, many older Pakistani, Yemeni, African and Caribbean and Somali men were previously employed as unskilled labourers in the steel and engineering industries. Literacy was essential for their re-training and the re-building of their lives.

In 1987, Sheffield City Council carried out a survey with the Yemeni community that established the close relationship between levels of literacy and opportunities for employment. 82 per cent of men and 67 per cent of women defined themselves as not fluent in English, and 86 per cent of the men as not able to read English fluently (Sheffield City Council/DEED 1988a).

With the destruction of heavy industries, many black people were laid off without any hope of retraining or alternative employment. For many, serious industry-related illness was the most they had to show for 20 to 30 years' service. 95 per cent of 622 people who received audiometric tests were advised to claim common law compensation for work-related loss of hearing (Sheffield City Council/DEED 1988b).

In 1987, apart from the Yemeni Community Profile, there was only circumstantial information collected by community groups and the adult service. This information, however, pointed to the possibility of between 3,000 and 8,000 black women and

men who cannot read or write in their mother tongue or in English, whilst some also had difficulties with spoken English. It was suspected that between 50 per cent and 80 per cent of adults from Bangladesh, Somalia, Pakistan and Hong Kong were illiterate in English, but there was no open discussion about it (Sheffield City Council/LEA 1987/1988).

It should not be assumed that all the difficulties were due to lack of literacy, though that was one of the key reasons for unemployment. Average unemployment rates for black young people in Sheffield at this time were calculated to be between 60 per cent and 70 per cent (Sheffield City Council/DEED 1988a). There was a sense of being trapped and isolated, which the parents felt did nothing for the morale of the young and indeed the whole community.

The opportunity costs to the city were also great. **Community routes to literacy** (Sheffield City Council/LEA 1987/88), the city council's announcement of the campaign, not only recognised the damage to black people but also the deprivation to 'the wider community of the contribution they could make to it'. Many black people not only have industrial experience which needs enhancing, they also have knowledge of craft and cultural production and agriculture which they brought with them and which has never been utilised. The continued neglect of people in need of literacy education constituted a sad waste of human resources.

The philosophy of the literacy campaign

It quickly became clear after 1987 that a literacy campaign of some sort was required so that the city council could discharge its responsibilities to black people. The following problems were already clear and had been detailed in **Community routes to literacy** (Sheffield City Council/LEA 1987/88):

- given the numbers involved, the variety of communities to be addressed and the complexity of the issues, it was felt that the organisation of the adult service, its policy and educational framework, was simply not able to respond to the demand;
- a professional ideology and a largely middle-class staff dominated this sector of learning. Literacy was provided by 'people who were perceived as outsiders by the community they were attempting to serve'. Educators with goodwill 'were often very ignorant of the concerns, anxieties, cultural mores and specific needs of the communities in which they were working'. They 'had few lines of communication into communities and so could not use the information networks which exist in them to overcome such sensitivities';
- few tutors were bilingual and when they were, they associated too strongly with the outlook of the adult service;

- national funding bodies were neither aware of the extent of the problem nor easily inclined to respond;
- previous literacy campaigns in Britain were not sufficiently successful or relevant to provide a useful model for a black one;
- black people as individuals or groups had few choices and certainly no control or leadership in their own learning.

Campaign strategy

The Sheffield LEA team was quite clear that the city's black communities were a great asset for the city and the campaign. Therefore, the strategy sought:

- as part of its essential aim, to achieve general community development;
- bilingual provision and a delivery that enhanced rather than undermined learners' confidence and existing knowledge;
- a campaign structure appropriate to the task and flexible so that it could deal with the suspicion and mistrust which accrues from long-term neglect, the diversity of the communities involved and the complexities of the levels of need in each community, which often did not correspond to existing provision;
- to use the communities' own resources, their own young people, and to ensure they benefited directly from their participation in terms of education and employment;
- to be popular, dynamic, all-embracing and, not least, campaigning.

Literacy assistants

The appropriate structure for the campaign was only possible, it was thought, through the use of young women and men from the communities. They were to be bilingual, educated in the British system, streetwise, and with a sound cultural background shared with their parents.

These young people of between 18 and 26 years old were to be recruited as literacy assistants in groups of 12 (six men and six women). It was planned that the programme should recruit up to 300 people per annum, and that they be given a training allowance.

For many of the young people, British schooling had been an unremarkable experience, draining them of any great desire to seek formal learning. The world of work had been no friendlier. The result was that instead of their young people becoming the black community's greatest asset, the system was treating them as a problem.

The campaign planning team believed that, while the young people were disillusioned with the education system, they were not put off learning itself.

Given the right context, they could do socially meaningful work for their communities and also receive appropriate and relevant education and training for themselves. We believed we could turn the situation round to the benefit of the young people, and deliver literacy education to their parents.

The literacy assistants were, therefore, to spend two and a half days a week with a tertiary college tutor and receive basic training to deliver literacy education under the supervision of college staff.

For two and a half days a week, literacy assistants were expected to go into homes and community centres, mosques and churches, libraries and nurseries, to find and offer education to potential black learners. They were to offer one-to-one classes where needed and to encourage isolated learners to attend larger gatherings where appropriate, maybe in each other's homes or at an adult education centre. It was anticipated that they would assist black people with little English in their day-to-day contacts with doctors, the Department of Social Security, or when out shopping, using the time as an English lesson.

The relationship between the young people and their aunts, uncles, neighbours and friends is close, warm, respectful and culturally regulated. Using this intimacy, the assistants were expected to move the learners on quickly into vocational and academic classes in the colleges.

It was anticipated that the assistants would develop themselves and their organisation and presentation skills. They would assume a responsibility few working class black people – let alone young people – are given. This context was meant to transform these young people into a dynamic force and a conduit for the social and educational transformation of neglected black communities.

Once their morale and sights had been raised, it was important that they should receive genuine and substantial benefits from their energetic participation in the campaign. Thus, for the other half of their week, the assistants were to be invited to Sheffield Hallam University for an accredited one year course which would get them an undergraduate place in higher education: something that, for many, was far beyond their dreams and expectations. It was expected that, by the end of the year, they would come, quite rightly, to consider it their right to receive HE. That alone was a community development issue. As it turned out, some reacted in this way while the rest transferred the bolder attitude to other forms of learning or to employment.

Community leadership

The campaign model firmly placed the community in leadership at every point. The structure of the campaign was expected to suit every community participating in it. The Black Literacy Campaign was, therefore, to be fragmented into 'cells'

which would address and be controlled by specific community groups. There was to be at least one cell, made up of 12 assistants and with its own campaign management group (CMG), per community.

Community leadership was to be realised in the constitution of the CMG – two representatives of the community (one of whom was to chair), two assistants, the campaign supervisor (a tutor from a college), an LEA representative (from the SUMES team) and the course co-ordinator from the polytechnic. Effort was made to ensure a balanced gender representation.

The purpose of the CMG was to decide on day-to-day policy, expenditure, conduct and priorities of the campaign. It was to be where different agencies synthesised a co-operative response to literacy needs, under community guidance.

Later, as the campaign developed, the community steering groups emerged. Each campaigning community has one or its equivalent and their membership represents the different interests in that community. Their purpose is to take policy leadership and be a watchdog of the campaign from the community point of view. These groups have proved very valuable both to the community and the LEA and have proved a constructive context for dialogue, problem-solving and planning.

Initial problems

In 1988, we presented to the chief education officer and senior politicians a disturbing analysis of neglect, but with solutions that appeared to be realistic. The support was enthusiastic, with the proviso that funding – £5m at 1988 prices over five years – had to be found from outside.

First approaches to potential funders including ALBSU (the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit), MSC (the then Manpower Services Commission), Europe, local businesses, charities, banks, foreign embassies etc., were very discouraging. The break came with a small underspend in an LEA budget (SUMES team) and a grant from the Prince's Trust. With this sum, we were able to run the first assistants' team with the Yemenis from December 1988 to August 1989.

Other monies then began to come in slowly, from the Urban Programme, the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Europe, the Training Agency.

The Yemeni Literacy Campaign

The Yemeni Literacy Campaign (YLC) holds a special place in the history of the Sheffield Black Literacy Campaign. Its success was due to the idealism of staff everywhere in the education service, but especially due to the detailed work put in by the community and Parkwood College. Two people stand out especially: Dr. Abdul Galil Shaif, then Chair of the Yemeni Community Association, and Roger

Adams, the senior lecturer responsible for community education at Parkwood. Their tireless work was crucial to the success of the campaign.

The positive results are, to paraphrase a certain German philosopher, illustrative of the cunning of the campaign. These positive results include the following.

- Community development has been astonishing and profound. Since 1988, we have seen this community putting forward education for women, young people and older people as their highest priority. They have consumed the services offered to them through community education (Adams 1992). At Ellesmere Centre, there are something like 250 student attendances per week, an increase of between 150 and 200 (Sheffield City Council/LEA 1991).

- Many of the young people have, for the first time, sought and gained access to further and higher education. Their participation in the campaign much reduced a sense of cynicism, and whetted their appetite for learning.

- The co-operation around the campaign made a dramatic contribution to the unification of different factions in the Yemeni community. Bitter conflict between groups has now been replaced by the collective determination to find more resources and learning for the whole community. The unified community has been successful in developing a Yemeni Economic and Training Centre.

- The YLC has had a positive impact on the approaches of the providers of adult, further and higher education, on the careers and youth services, on community workers (Adams 1992). English as a second language for adults received a major overhaul (Kerton 1992). In short, the campaign has provided some reality to the often repeated rhetoric of 'empowerment'.

- Most importantly, the campaign brought out large numbers of mothers and young women, not only to pursue learning but also to take their rightful place in the leadership of the campaign, the Economic Centre and the Yemeni Association. The astonishing distance travelled is captured in the declaration made by a 60 year old mother learning to read and write – that she was going to college afterwards to enrol for the Child Care Assistants' course. She has now qualified.

A number of other communities are now involved, with 72 assistants, 1,000 learners and the new Sheffield College.

Conclusion

The campaign was an experiment imposed upon us by the closure of heavy industry in the city. It raised fundamental questions about our assumptions, rhetoric

and ability to deliver services to communities. It also forced us to seek solutions which are having a profound and positive impact on all of Sheffield's black communities, the delivery of community education, college structures and progression, ESoL, teaching methods, community participation, careers and counselling, training and consultation. One Sheffield college is now investigating the viability of extending the campaign to the white community.

It is not an exaggeration to claim that the success of the campaign has been, like reason, quietly and steadily (and of course cunningly) to extend its philosophy and conduct to other City Council services.

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Chapter 8: Community access to further education through Open College credits

Sue Webb
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If learners are to progress, they need not only the motivation and confidence to move on but also evidence of their learning achievement in a form which is widely understood and recognised. Yet as participation in the further education sector increases[1], the issue of access to accredited success still needs to be addressed.

Open College Networks (OCNs) offer an effective approach to this issue. There is now no doubt that OCN accreditation:

- enhances motivation and confidence and that the awarding of credit is a key factor in this process;
- increases learners' ambitions and leads them to seek more formal education and training;
- reaches groups of learners that post-school education has traditionally failed to reach. (FEU 1993)

What are OCNs?

In the last decade there has been a growing concern to expand access to education for those who have benefited least (Sargant 1991).

OCNs were created to open access routes for such learners, by awarding credit for learning outside the traditional qualification systems, formalising progression routes and improving the quality of learning programmes. By 1992, 900 organisations were members of OCNs, including 370 institutions of further and higher education, while annual registrations of learners had reached 25,000. 'The National Open College Network... had nine members subscribing to a common framework of accreditation processes and quality assurance, with 11 associates preparing to join.' (FEU 1993)

1 Enrolments in further education in the United Kingdom increased by 32 per cent between 1979/80 and 1990/91 (HMSO 1993)

Open College Networks are distinctive. They:

- accredit in the community;
- value and accredit experience;
- work directly with tutors and students on the construction of courses;
- tailor learning experiences to the needs of students;
- recognise learning as it happens.

As a result, OCNs attract a high proportion of students traditionally under-represented in accredited education and training. For example:

- people with no or low-level qualifications;
- members of social classes C1, D and E;
- women;
- black people;
- disabled people;
- those who are unemployed and seeking work (FEU 1993).

OCNs provide a collaborative approach to recognising achievement, in particular the achievement of learners who have few formal qualifications. By encouraging targeting of the recognition process to those who have benefited least from accredited success, OCNs can be seen to be offering a framework for progression and 'credit where it's due' (Browning 1989, Sanders 1987).

Learners are enabled to move on because the framework of credits and levels provides something similar to an exchange rate mechanism for describing and measuring learning which may have previously gone unrecognised. Consequently the learning can be aligned with that of existing qualifications. Accredited success within an OCN can place the learner on pathways into and through national systems of qualifications (UDACE/NCVQ 1990, CNAA 1992).

In a comprehensive study of learners who finished OCN courses in 1990–91, it was found that 53 per cent progressed to other courses and 72 per cent either progressed or continued their existing learning programme. Interestingly and significantly, the research also detected a qualitative change in ambitions: eight per cent said they joined their OCN course to help them get a job, four per cent to help them in their current job. When asked about their next course, these figures were 16 per cent and 17 per cent respectively (FEU 1993).

As the main focus for decision-making about the provision of education moves away from the local education authorities to the institutional providers, so the challenge for those concerned with widening access will be in making the learning in community settings transparent with that in formal institutions. This is the concern underpinning the developments in the accreditation of learning in community settings which are described in the rest of this chapter.

Recognition of learning in a neighbourhood centre

Royle Green is an excellent example of a neighbourhood centre where the style of delivery may be informal but the degree of commitment no less than that found among students and teachers in more formal mainstream provision. Indeed, it is precisely because of the high level of commitment on the part of such adults, and their eagerness to work hard, that the recognition of achievement is so important.

The centre is located in Northenden, a suburb of Manchester adjoining Wythenshawe, with a population of approximately 6,000. Housed in what was a purpose-built infant school of the mid-1960s, the facilities are good and the buildings conveniently placed for use by many in a community which is predominantly white, working/lower middle class, with a high proportion of elderly people. Royle Green also supports groups meeting outside the centre – in the local library, primary school and health centre. It was the excellent work being done by parents in the various toddler groups in these venues, that prompted the centre's first course submission to Manchester Open College Federation.

In spite of running these playgroups most effectively, the parents, who were all women, expressed a lack of confidence in certain skills they felt were essential to their roles as play-workers. Fifteen women from five different parent and toddler groups came together with a tutor from the centre to identify an appropriate content and organisation for a course.

They felt this should be offered in the local community centre rather than the more distant further education college which they saw as formal and intimidating. The content would include numeracy and literacy skills and some child development theory. Yet they suggested making links with other organisations and providers, such as the Adult Basic Education Unit of the college and a 'books and stories' project group, by inviting these agencies to tutor some of the sessions. This was one of the teaching methods the women felt would extend their experiences and confidence to consider progression to other institutions.

In the course design, the women also gave attention to the context in which they would learn. The organisational arrangements they agreed to included 10 two-hour daytime sessions within school hours, adequate free child-care, and a room at the centre for quiet study for those women who had difficulty working at home.

This collaborative effort resulted in a course design that encouraged the group to continue to support each other. In addition, the women's confidence and motivation to complete the course was high. This was because they had participated in the process of translating their informal learning experiences into formal statements about learning outcomes and assessments which could be publicly scrutinised through external recognition and moderation and measured in terms of credits and levels.

Accreditation did nothing to undermine the 'neighbourhood' or 'informal' nature of activities in the centre; the focus was still the student and her needs and expectations. Drop-out was almost non-existent. Of the original group of 15, one left when she moved house, and the remaining 14 all successfully completed the course and were awarded Manchester Open College Federation (MOCF) credits at level 2.[2]

Measuring success

How might the success of this course be gauged and by whom?

Taking the perspective of the women and considering their different starting points, the criteria would include having the confidence and motivation to complete a course, and gaining credits which they could use for progression. For example:

> Coming to the centre was my second chance. I was nervous when I did my first MOCF course, it was level 2 in childcare but now I expect the courses to be accredited. I want to build up my MOCF certificates so that I've something to show when I go to college or get a job. (Shirley, aged 34)

Using these criteria, it is clear that for the vast majority, the course was extremely successful. For over half the group, this first attempt at returning to education led to their involvement in other provision offered by the nearby further education college. While for others further study was best done within the centre where other short courses within the subject area were devised and run, enabling learners to build up credits at the same level or to acquire credits at a higher level.

A further criterion by which the success of the course may be judged is the extent to which OCN accreditation helps to increase the participation of those who have benefited least from education and have few formal qualifications. The testimonies of the Royle Green women illustrate the human dimension behind the statistics of OCN success.[3]

At the Royle Green centre, learners who had described themselves as 'school or college failures' were succeeding. For example:

> When I went to FE straight from school, I was supposed to be an adult immediately but there wasn't enough support so I didn't do very well. On

2 In broad terms, OCN level 1 covers basic communications skills; level 2 covers consolidation and wider application and is broadly equivalent to GCSE level. Level 4 is equivalent to A level.

3 A high proportion of OCN learners in the Manchester region are from a limited range of occupational groups. 26 per cent had been or are supervisory or clerical workers; 41 per cent had been or are skilled manual workers; 22 per cent had been or are semi-skilled or unskilled workers; and 32 per cent are state pensioners or casual workers (FEU 1993).

> the Royle Green course I was helped along by the other women as well as the tutor. I knew what was expected of me. (Irene, aged 28)

These learners considered that successful achievement was within their reach because in addition to a supportive learning environment, their needs as adult women with responsibilities were being acknowledged. This is how some learners viewed the experience:

> You know here that the MOCF courses will be manageable; they're not like school…It all fitted in with my family. (Irene, aged 28)

> For women, MOCF is great. Just a short-term commitment that you feel you can handle as well as look after your children. It showed I wasn't 'brain-dead' just because I was at home – I have my MOCF certificate to prove what I had done. (Deborah, aged 28)

Such courses, therefore, can play an important part in realising the equal opportunities policies of educational providers and the anti-poverty strategies of local authorities.

It was particularly encouraging that eight of the women from the parent and toddlers course went on to help to devise a second 10 week course on healthcare of the under-fives which the whole group felt would be an excellent extension of the work they had done so far. This participation in itself indicates the increase in confidence that can be gained by people who see their work being valued and rewarded by the educational establishment.

Valuing experimental learning

By becoming part of a system of accreditation at a local level, many adults feel more able to proceed into more formal educational establishments. In making what previously might have been an unthinkable step into college, they have frequently revalued their previous experiences as they find that these have a relevance to formal qualifications frameworks. One of the learners described her experience in the following way:

> I decided to go on to higher education having gained confidence and new perspectives on my own interests and abilities [which can be] attributed partly to the play-scheme work and related short courses.
>
> In my bid to enter a BEd degree course, I took a child development GCSE, which I passed. In retrospect though, I see the years working on the play-scheme are of much greater relevance to teaching children and classroom life in general than the theory I studied. Had the play-scheme work been accredited in some way I would have felt this to be sufficient recent

> experience and formal qualification unnecessary to attain. (Phil, aged 37. Previous qualifications eight GCE O levels, two A levels, gained at school.)

Within the Royle Green community centre there were a number of women like Phil who have had experience of working unpaid on holiday play-schemes or with the parent and toddler groups. However, unlike Phil, few of these women had formal qualifications. These women were finding that they had much to contribute in their courses and they began to discuss with their tutor the extent to which they could draw on their previous experience to demonstrate their understanding of, for example, the key issues in organising play.

Although not articulated in this form, the women were seeking assessment of their prior learning and achievement. The learning programmes at Royle Green were already acknowledging these women's experiences, but in an informal way. The next step was to formalise the recognition of this life-long learning, to give a credit certificate for this and perhaps to enable exemption from parts of any further course of study. Sheila, who would like to teach adults with special needs, describes her interest in assessment of her experiential learning in the following way:

> I've had lots of experience and now have the confidence but I still haven't got enough qualifications on paper. (Sheila, aged 33. Previous qualifications O level English and CSEs from school and a course in residential childcare.)

Sheila's biography may be typical. She gave up full-time work at the birth of her first child, and has been involved ever since in numerous part-time and voluntary activities. These experiences have helped to raise her expectations about employment though they have not earned her enough marketable qualifications to secure the type of paid work she is interested in now. She recounts this development in the following way:

> I was a full-time mother/home maker and I attended a local parent and toddlers group where I ended up doing a lot of the wall-displays. I went on a short course at the Royle Green centre...and got a qualification, OCN level 2...then another OCN level 2. I had now started to work (unpaid and voluntary) for the Scouting movement...I also began working on the Easter and summer play-schemes...I did a lot of one day training sessions...I started to teach some of the other playworkers how to do art and craft with children...I even got some part-time temporary teaching in two centres...I taught crafts to women who had little confidence and no experience in this area. I would now like to get some qualifications in teaching adults.

Following this demand for recognition of experiential learning, a programme for the 'accreditation of skills gained working with young children' was submitted to the OCN. It was assumed that it would be relevant to those adults, in the main women, who were seeking external validation of the knowledge and skills they

had acquired as part-time or informal voluntary or paid workers in creches, parent and toddler groups, playgroups, classrooms or play-schemes.

Initial consultations with such a group of women from Royle Green and other neighbourhood centres, led to the identification of the range of learning experiences for which accreditation might be sought. Further activities involved designing a process for supporting the women in the identification and assessment of their experiential learning and clarifying how such learning would be recognised and evaluated. Since the aim of the assessment of prior learning was to enhance students' progression within wider qualification frameworks, the tutors worked with the students to develop a profile of the likely skills and knowledge for which credit or exemption would be claimed.

To date, a number of women have been engaged in collecting evidence for portfolios of their experiential learning in work with young children for the award of OCN credits at level 3. Through this process they have been able to demonstrate learning which is equivalent to the outcomes of the initial play training programme, an OCN accredited course for play-workers employed by Manchester City Council, and this certification has enabled them to secure employment and be paid as qualified play-workers.

It seems highly likely that some of these learners will be able to demonstrate other learning which may be equivalent to the entry requirements for a range of vocational and professional courses, for example the new modular course for nursery nurses (NNEB), the BTEC National or GNVQs in Social Care, National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in Childcare and Education, and the Diploma in Youth and Community Work.

A close fit has been found between some of the learning outcomes recognised through the OCN accreditation and some of the competency statements of some units of a range of NVQs. Moreover, since the OCN credit record is evidence that these competencies have been assessed and externally moderated for the award of credits at a particular level, the credit record may be used by the learner to gain exemption from elements of some further courses of study. Accreditation of this experiential learning in organising holiday play-schemes has created access routes into a range of national qualifications in work with young children and, less predictably, it has revealed routes into other areas such as the NVQ in business administration.

Taking a big step

The women learners of Royle Green have clearly gained confidence and many have begun to make decisions about their futures involving educational progression to other institutions and the potential of new careers. Yet there were others for

whom the next step involved continuing to take an active part in the local community though with greater knowledge and understanding of how to affect local decision-making.

Cath Brazil is a member of the newly formed Northenden Research Group which has provided a social audit service for the South Manchester College of Further Education. She attributes the development of the group and its success in gaining contracts to carry out local investigative studies, as well as her involvement in these activities, to the confidence, knowledge and skills she and others gained when they were earning their OCN credits for learning at the Royle Green centre:

> If anyone had said two years ago that we'd be doing this now I'd have said 'no way' – yet here we are bridging the gap between community and college.

The group had gained further experience during 1991 when they successfully organised a campaign and lobby of local councillors to prevent the centre from closure by the local authority, which was in financial difficulties. They had developed the confidence to:

> ...write to important people and talk to people like the chair of education. It's amazing that we could do this and produce our own booklet but now that we've done it, we know we can work as a group to do really challenging things. It's quite exciting really. The children still come first and we worry a lot but it gets done. (Cath Brazil)

When early in 1992, managers at The South Manchester College were considering ways in which the institution could better serve the nearby residents and decided that a social audit was required, they approached the local adult education centre for guidance rather than employ an external consultant. Links between the adult education centre and the college had already been formed through student progression and some sharing and exchange of teaching staff. Therefore, college managers saw the centre as an appropriate place to locate a study of the characteristics and needs of the neighbourhood; and within the centre the women who had mounted the 'save the centre' from closure campaign seemed best placed to review the educational needs of the area.

The women told the college policy-makers that they felt that it was important to listen to what local people were saying before plans were developed to meet their educational needs. They were interested in finding out more about how adults could move from community-based adult education to college-based further education and so they agreed to do the research or social audit of the area and produce a report which the college could use to inform staff. The report might also provide the information which could help the college policy-makers identify the

appropriate curriculum and delivery methods to meet the needs of a broader-based client group.

This task was successfully completed and has led to the group becoming closely involved with the college in planning future course developments. The college provision is being extended and offered at the places which adults use in the community; adult education staff and students are being encouraged to make use of the FE provision in the college; and both sectors, adult and further education, are encouraged to make full use of the OCN accreditation framework to facilitate access to FE. A successful open day, a report, briefing sessions, as well as numerous meetings and outreach work have taken place in an attempt to make post-16 education more accessible to more varied groups of people.

Conclusion

OCNs offer accreditation in the community, for the community, and their approach involves the community in the construction of learning programmes. The recent research (FEU 1993) is further evidence of just how successful this approach is.

It also presents a challenge to those developing national accreditation and qualification frameworks to ensure that such systems are more responsive and more comprehensive, and offers optimism that we can reach out and serve communities that have had a poor deal from education and training in the past.

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Chapter 9: Supporting visually impaired students in vocational education

Kevin Connell

Over one million people in Britain are eligible for registration as blind and partially sighted – six times the number who are actually registered. Unemployment amongst blind and partially sighted people is even higher than for people with disabilities as a whole. Only 27 per cent of visually impaired people of working age are in employment, compared with 31 per cent of people with disabilities. For those eligible to register as blind, the figure is as low as 17 per cent (Bruce, McKennell and Walker 1991).

Lack of the right vocational education and training opportunities is by no means the only factor contributing to these absurd levels. However, it is the principal area in which colleges committed to serving the community can contribute. Traditionally, training prepared visually impaired people for a narrow range of white-collar jobs that had become recognized as 'suitable' – in telephony, audio typewriting and computer programming. The narrowness of the curriculum was exacerbated by segregation: only a limited range of courses could be offered given the limited numbers involved. Preparing blind people for open employment must mean preparing them to work alongside sighted people – segregation in education and training makes this much more difficult.

Until 1989, the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) ran the Commercial Training College in London. This specialist college could only provide a limited curriculum in a segregated environment, although attempts had been made to widen the curriculum with the addition of word processing and access technology in the mid-'80s. The delivery of quality training for work and real choice for students were the major reasons for the college moving to Loughborough and developing a partnership with a mainstream college. At the same time it changed its name to the RNIB Vocational Training College.

Partnership

In 1979, a working party had recommended that the then Commercial Training College should seek a full merger with a suitable host college. In practice, the present partnership between two independent institutions – RNIB Vocational Training College and Loughborough College – has proved a better arrangement, allowing the students to have the best of both worlds – all the advantages of an independent, specialist college and access to mainstream provision, The partnership is a model for collaboration between sectors to provide well supported integration for those students whose additional needs are so great that they could not be met by the normal levels of resourcing and expertise available in the mainstream FE sector.

The very future of specialist, voluntary sector providers may well lie in precisely these kinds of partnership and, from the point of view of the mainstream college, such partnerships form a highly effective method of ensuring that the needs of otherwise disadvantaged minorities in the community are effectively met and of achieving equality of access for learners regardless of ability or disability.

There are many well supported voluntary sector organisations that are committed to taking action to ensure that people with disabilities derive the maximum benefit from the full range of community services and facilities. The expertise and enthusiasm of their staff and members, and their access to funding sources can provide a massive resource to be tapped by colleges wanting to improve provision for disadvantaged groups.

There is a multitude of issues facing incorporated FE colleges regarding the participation of learners with disabilities and learning difficulties. One of the most complex is to ensure that resources are adjusted and delivered flexibly in response to varying levels of need. A related issue is that of identifying suitable outcome measures for the whole college that will reflect the achievements of all students including those with additional needs, since outcomes will increasingly determine funding levels. The future of students with additional needs in mainstream colleges is secure provided that a college can claim additional resources when enrolling students with additional needs. The challenge then is for the college to relate the additional resource to meeting the additional need. For specialist, independent colleges, funding comes in the form of a fee for each individual student which can be tied to a contract, an action plan and individual goals. Operating both systems side by side allows for considerable flexibility and cost-effectiveness in matching provision to individual need enabling the extra funds to follow the student. Interestingly, recent unpublished research shows that the cost of supporting visually impaired students in mainstream day provision at around £15,000 per year compares not unfavourably with the residential fee of around £18,000 per year charged by independent colleges.

Integration

In philosophical terms, one of the most important reasons for seeking a partnership with a mainstream college was to pursue a policy of integration. There are clear practical advantages in terms of access to a wider curriculum and preparation for living and working in open society but integration is not an end in itself. Here, it is used to mean the opportunity for visually impaired people to study, work or engage in social activity with or alongside their sighted peers. It does not necessarily mean that the frequency or quality of interactions between disabled and able-bodied people is the same as for interactions between members of either group. The important thing is that it should depend on choice.

The link between the Vocational College and Loughborough College shows how partnership arrangements can work to mutual advantage. It operates at many levels with cross-representation on the top decision-making bodies of each college, on equal opportunities structures, and a Joint Development Committee which stimulates common initiatives. The key senior lecturer post is jointly sponsored. Fully sighted Loughborough College students have their own room in the Vocational College and are able to use the snack bar.

Individual students are supported on a wide range of Loughborough College courses. Parts of courses at the Vocational College are planned and delivered jointly by a course team comprising staff from both institutions, to both blind and sighted students together. Some joint provision takes place in the respective colleges' training offices where mixed teams of students undertake 'real' practical work.

There is, however, no doubt that the heart of the partnership is the support for individuals on mainstream courses. Here, the relationship between the two colleges is somewhat similar to the relationship between a course delivery department and a learning support team within a well organised FE college, although the support is much more intensive. In this case, students enrol at both colleges simultaneously and are entitled to all the services of both colleges. All courses at Loughborough College are available to visually impaired students provided they can meet the entry criteria and, with support, the demands of the course. Before admission, each student undergoes a dual assessment. At Loughborough College, each applicant must meet exactly the same entrance criteria as other students. Staff from the Vocational College make an assessment both of the applicant's ability to study effectively and the ability of the support service to meet the applicant's additional needs arising from her/his visual impairment. The demands of the course have to be taken into account, including the nature of the course work, type of assignments to be completed and any practical work. Applicants who have not yet acquired the basic skills necessary for enrolment on to a vocational course can attend a foundation course where the required skills can be developed.

This year (1993), there will be more visually impaired students studying on full-time, mainstream further education courses at Loughborough than at any other college in the country. Over the last three years, visually impaired students have studied in most divisions of the college from engineering and catering through business and finance, computer studies, travel and tourism, sport and leisure studies to social care and they have been successful at all levels from First Certificate to Higher National Diploma level. A specialist college, working on its own, could never have provided opportunities for training in such a wide variety of fields and a substantial pool of expertise and experience is being built up that can be disseminated to other specialist centres.

The advantages for the FE college of managing learning support for integrated students together with specialist provision within the same organisation are also clear. In-house, specialist courses include many training modules in skills that are also useful to students on mainstream courses. Of particular value are keyboarding, wordprocessing, Braille, low vision, access technology, personal and social skills and mobility.

The learning support service

The learning support service which the Vocational College operates at Loughborough College comprises the full range of material and human support that is increasingly to be found in any college putting sufficient resources in to an effective learning support service. The service operates out of a large resource base at the centre of the main building and is equipped with closed-circuit televisions, fully adapted PCs with synthetic speech, large character and Braille outputs, an optical character reader, a photo-enlarger, laser-jet printer, Braille embosser, CD ROM and a wide range of portable equipment that students can borrow for making notes in the classroom or for completing assignments in the library or in their study-bedrooms.

This work is complemented by the Vocational College's library and information service. This can, amongst many other things, transcribe learning materials into suitable media (i.e. large print, Braille, computer disk or tape) and enlarge or emboss diagrams.

Far more important than the equipment is the staff. Each student has a learning support tutor who is responsible for ensuring that the student can gain full access to his/her chosen course. The core of the role involves the continuous assessment of students' needs, monitoring of progress (directly and indirectly via information from personal tutors), making decisions about the most appropriate and effective responses and implementing those decisions personally and through counselling students and advising other staff.

The principal professional ethic is one of student-centredness. Above all, the approach of the support tutor should be one which gradually and progressively enables students to recognise and manage their own learning needs. As the tutor and the student agree the most suitable working methods, students should increasingly be in a position to negotiate their own support, mobilising facilities and resources for themselves. The kinds of decisions that need to be agreed between students and tutors include their requirements for readers and other assistance, arrangements for gaining access to equipment, the skill and backup for using the equipment and, most importantly, the personal counselling support of the tutor. One of the most difficult judgements a student has to make is knowing when and how to ask for additional support. Equally, one of the most delicate judgements the tutor has to make is knowing when and how to offer support in situations where the student has not yet recognised the potential value of that support.

Learning support assistants also play a vital part in the system. Under the direction of the learning support tutors, they work with students, enabling them to gain access to the study material they need. This work may be carried on outside the classroom (e.g. research or preparing assignments), or alternatively, it may be inside the classroom (helping students to access information, practical lessons offering one-to-one supervision, passing on information about the immediate environment and ensuring student safety).

The outreach service

The idea of partnership can be extended beyond an association between two colleges. Through outreach, specialist colleges and centres can work with a number of providers, spreading the expertise and experience more widely. The Vocational College has an outreach service delivering a range of learning support services to visually impaired students and their tutors at other colleges. It has formed a consortium with five local training and enterprise councils (TECs), led by Leicestershire TEC. The consortium has recently been awarded a contract by the Employment Department to pilot a scheme for supporting individual blind or partially sighted students on mainstream courses throughout the region. Using schemes of this kind, students who might have otherwise required residential places will be able to study at their own local college. At the end of the two year pilot period, it is hoped that this arrangement will provide a model for regional provision that can be replicated elsewhere in the country using other specialist colleges.

The Vocational College is also at the centre of a national network of centres (mostly colleges) that are staffed and equipped to adapt open learning materials into media accessible to visually impaired people. The materials are produced by

open learning providers for sighted students and then converted and adapted by the specialist centres. The college maintains a directory of centres listing what each can do and a database of materials that have been adapted. This service, also established with funding from the Employment Department, is available to colleges and training centres throughout the country and can take materials for adaptation from any educational source.

The future

The future of specialist provision for severely visually impaired people lies in partnership and collaboration.

In the new, corporate sector, specialist staff and facilities can be grouped together and based in colleges with established reputations from which services can be contracted out to other institutions. This way, blind and partially sighted trainees can have the best of both worlds. They can have access to the same range of educational and training opportunities that sighted people take for granted, along with all the specialist inputs of staff and equipment that have previously only existed in the segregated sector. High quality, specialist training, tailored to meet the specific needs of blind people, can continue to exist. It is not a choice between integrated or segregated training: nor training in an ordinary setting or training in a specialist setting. Managing the two kinds of training together achieves high quality training, makes the best use of resources and is therefore cost-effective. Much more importantly, it means that visually impaired people can have a real choice.

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Chapter 10: When I get old...

Jim Soulsby

Why should the educational and training needs of older adults attract our special attention? In an educational world increasingly organised according to market principles and dominated by the alleged requirements of the economy, older adults might appear a hopeless cause.

Not so. There are powerful arguments for addressing the issue, and we can be optimistic that current developments in the delivery of post-school education offer practical ways to enable us to meet the needs of people right across the age spectrum.

The argument for older adults

If further and higher education is to serve communities, then the sector has to face the fact that a quarter of the population comprises 'older adults'.

Never before have there been as many people over the age of 60 as there are now. In the 1880s, only five per cent of the population were over 60 compared with 20 per cent in the 1980s (Harrison 1988). 18 per cent of the population of the United Kingdom in 1990 was over pensionable age – 10.5 million people (Age Concern England 1992). Between 1989 and 2030 the UK population is expected to rise by seven per cent but in the 45–59 age group this increase will be 12 per cent; 36 per cent for those aged between 60 and 74; and a staggering 44 per cent for those 75 and over.

The issue is not, however, simply one of numbers. It has a sharp gender dimension. Of the 10.5m people over pensionable age, 6.8m (65 per cent) are women. The gender imbalance is accentuated amongst even older people. Two-thirds of people over 75 are women and of those over 85, three-quarters are women.

True, these demographic trends are accompanied by social changes – a steady decrease in the age at which employees leave the workplace, either by choice or

compulsion. Should we read this as a reduction in the need for education of these younger 'older adults'?

Over the last decade, awareness of demographic trends has led to an increase in the marketability of older people and a rise in organisations purporting to fight and lobby over pensions, ageing, retirement and ageism issues. These have not been sufficient to mobilise the older sector of the community in the same way as in the United States, where the 'grey panther' movement carries real influence. However, in the future there may well be issues which could unite older people and create an effective, lasting lobby. It would be ironic if the changes in the education of adults became the first issue. Can further and higher education afford to ignore the political potential of grey power?

There are other factors which should be mentioned. Firstly, someone aged 65 in 1993 will probably have started work sometime after the Second World War – at the beginning of the Welfare State. They paid (through their taxes) for the education system but it may not have benefited them directly. Secondly, the number of older adults whose country of birth and cultural origins are not British is steadily increasing. For example, it is estimated that there will be a sixfold increase between 1981 and 2000 in those of pensionable age born in the Caribbean (Bowling 1990). Alison Norman (1985) describes such older people as being in 'triple jeopardy': they are old; they live in poor physical conditions; and service provision is inaccessible to them (see also Lancashire Social Services 1990, Spencer 1984 and Glendenning and Pearson 1988). Thirdly, as the earlier statistics reveal, the greatest proportion of those living longer are women and many of them will be carers – looking after even older parents, companions or partners. As the Carnegie Inquiry (Schuller and Bostyn 1992) argued, we need a new social economy of the 'Third Age' which takes into account the actual contribution made by older adults and the social and economic costs of failing to adopt positive policies. Those positive policies must include education and training.

Myths, legends and assumptions

The problem for retired people has often been that unfavourable assumptions were made about their ability and motivation to work and study. In the last decade, much has happened to indicate that motivation and ability are unimpaired.

There are as many as 10 per cent of the Third Age involved in some form of informal learning – through hobby and cultural activities, involvement in voluntary organisations, or through the media (Sargant 1991). Yet 10 per cent is a small amount and there is a big market here for colleges to research and service.

In **Learning later**, Harrison (1988) comments positively on the ability and desire of older people to learn or contribute to society, and the Carnegie Inquiry (Schuller

and Bostyn 1992) estimated that approximately 10 per cent of this group – taken as age 50 to 74 – were involved in some kind of formal education or training in 1991. The vivid pattern of participation by this three-quarters of a million people is shown in **Figure 3**.

Figure 3: Enrolments in formal education of 'Third Age'

	% of total	Enrolments
Adult education	54	400,000
Further education	20	150,000
Pre-retirement education	4	30,000
University of Third Age	3	20,000
National Extension College	1	4,000
Open College of the Arts	0.5	2,000
Open University undergraduate	1	10,000
Open University associate	–	1,000
Higher education (non-university)	1	7,000
Higher education (university)	0.25	1,200
High education (extra-mural)	18	70,000

Note: Third age taken as 50-74.

Source: **Carnegie Inquiry into the Third Age: learning, education, training and information in the Third Age.** (1992) Draft report – summary

One could be encouraged by the numbers involved in formal adult and further education but the figure is still only five per cent of the population in that age group. If as a consequence of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, much of traditional adult education will be at full cost, then even this small figure could rapidly diminish. After all, while the number leaving work with lump sums and pensions is increasing, there are still 54 per cent of pensioner households dependent on state benefits for at least 75 per cent of their income (Age Concern England 1992). Does adult and further education wish to lose these people, having attracted them in the first place?

For some older adults, there is a desire to retain some vocation. Extend, Grey Matters, REACH (retired executives active clearing house) and other similar initiatives have all been created to increase the employability, paid or voluntary, of those no longer in employment – below or above the statutory pension age.

In some cases, wanting work is not simply a matter of choice. Evidence suggests that any pool of long-term unemployed will contain many over 45s with low skills – particularly men. In January 1992 in the north-west, over 40 per cent of those registered unemployed for between four and five years were aged over 45. Of those registered for five years or more, this increased to nearly 60 per cent (Employment Department 1992). Unless action is taken to assist in their re-employment or in creating for them an effective community role, their poverty and the ensuing burden on the state will continue into their so-called retirement years.

There is also evidence that employers could benefit from the employment of older people. Contrary to popular myth, older adults do not have poor records of attendance, and are neither untrainable nor reluctant to change (Goddard and Soulsby 1988). For many years now, B&Q, the do-it-yourself superstore, has followed a policy of deliberately recruiting older adults, and prior to opening a new lingerie department, Marks and Spencer in Preston found to their surprise that customers preferred an older assistant when purchasing more intimate garments.

There is a college role here to upgrade skills, assess prior learning and experience, highlight transferable skills and build up confidence. Similarly, there is an educational process to be undertaken with employers and their representatives involved in personnel, recruitment and training (Laczko and Phillipson 1991, Mercer 1992).

Not only has economic activity to be considered but there is a growing realisation that denying a large sector of the population the opportunity to contribute any further to the community is a considerable waste, hastens dependency and therefore increases the burden on costly social services.

Recognising the special requirements of older learners: a positive way forward

The growth of the University of the Third Age (U3A) and the initiatives developed in its wake suggests that F and HE can play an active role in the education of older adults if it starts from a recognition of the group's special requirements.

U3A has been seen as suggesting that what was on offer at the local college was not appropriate. Observation of U3A might suggest that what is on offer is traditional adult education in disguise. However, U3A has its own special attractions:

- meeting with a group of people one can identify with;
- entering a 'safe' educational environment without exposing one's ignorance;
- being involved in decision-making, facilitation, leadership and teaching;
- deciding the method, place, pace and timing of the learning.

It is this understanding of U3A that reveals a potential role for colleges to serve their communities more effectively.

Since 1984 the University of Central Lancashire (then known as Lancashire Polytechnic) has encouraged, developed and supported the creation of over 50 U3A groups. Many of the groups chose in the early days the title 'life long learning' and the work in the university has continued under that title. These autonomous groups sought local support from churches, Age Concern, libraries, housing associations, pensioners' movements or local colleges. In Burnley, Chorley and Stockport, the FE college took a lead role in creating the groups and continue to offer their support through free or economical accommodation and access to other facilities. The Abraham Moss Centre in north Manchester supports its own College of the Third Age, a centre run by older adults with a programme of activities mixing the academic with the recreational and social, and providing some academic input when required.

The Senior Studies Institute at the University of Strathclyde aims to provide a structured programme of learning opportunities for the post-50 age group and to provide opportunities for older people to apply their learning in a positive way, thus maintaining their creative role in society. The classes operate within the university but by 1994 it is hoped that over 1,500 people in the Strathclyde region will be reached by a programme of vocational and non-vocational courses plus the option of assessment leading to accreditation and certification.

In all these examples there has been a thought that traditional non-attenders might be attracted to a tailor-made programme or self-help group, and that by sensitive facilitation there may be some recruitment to more mainstream provision. At the same time, a developing awareness of the needs of groups of this nature might influence the content, timing and method of delivery of mainstream provision.

The college role can go further. In the nine years of its existence, life-long learning in the University of Central Lancashire has:

- instituted an annual lecture series on retirement and/or educational issues;
- created a bursary to encourage women over 60 into higher education;
- set up an annual summer programme of activities led by retired people; and
- examined the education and training needs of those over 45 looking for employment or changes in employment through research, courses, conferences and workshops.

A small research project in Liverpool, called the Liverbus Older Learners' Campaign, set out in 1990 to conduct a survey into the needs, views and aspirations of older adults. Their recommendations to the LEA included:

- inter-agency working;
- a focus on those socio-economically disadvantaged;

- more local and accessible daytime provision;
- targeted provision offering safe learning environments;
- acting as potential feeder to mainstream opportunities;
- curriculum planning influenced by older adult organisations and guidance agencies;
- publicity and marketing to tackle low participation by older adults; and
- progression to HE and employment to be maintained and extended.

These recent developments have shown that there is much scope for autonomous learning within supportive environments. In other words, it may not be desirable or necessary for the college role always to be one of course creator and deliverer. U3A shows that the role might more profitably be one of facilitator and enabler, and this is not such a revolutionary concept. Indeed, it is fundamental to the 'new FE' with its emphasis on guidance, modularisation, assessment on demand (including APL) and individual, resource-based, self-paced study. These developments – largely instituted for younger students – create opportunities for older people to join mainstream higher and further education provision more easily and on terms that are consistent with their needs.

A radical course could be to follow some of the recent developments in community care. For example, any group in the community – whether united by age, geography, race or culture – could apply to run an educational programme at a venue and time of its choosing. Upon satisfying certain criteria – such as aims, objectives, numbers, methods of assessment and progression routes – it might receive funds for accommodation, administration, or for a course leader, teacher or facilitator. In many instances support will be required to explore and then state need, but this again could be part of the college role within a multi-agency framework.

Is it impossible for such radical measures to be adopted? The principal problems for FE in serving older adults stem from the pressure to concentrate resources on young students, the economically active, younger adults, and those on vocational programmes. This pressure is reflected in current funding structures and in legislation which denies income for much non-vocational work. But there are no prohibitions on work with older adults in these structures. Indeed, while FE college income is largely determined by plans to serve particular numbers of particular students, its disposal is largely a matter of discretion.

No one would suggest that colleges should raise money on a false prospectus for 16-19 year olds and then blow it on pensioners – but could older adults not get a share of the action towards which they have made such a significant contribution?

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Chapter 11: The college in the countryside

Gill Cathles
and
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The Women's Access Project aims to give unemployed women access to education and employment. It is based in the Melton Mowbray/Rutland area of east Leicestershire. Other than the market towns of Melton Mowbray, Oakham and Uppingham, the area is made up of approximately 150 villages with populations ranging from 100 to as few as five. The success of this project is remarkable, given the many barriers faced by students and providers in a rural setting. Also remarkable, in a predominantly affluent and middle class area, is that the project has been successful in attracting its priority group of women who have had poor or limited access to education in the past.

The project represents a collaboration between the LEA community education and adult basic education (ABE) services, schools, the voluntary sector and the local FE college at Melton Mowbray. Uppingham Community College began the work some eight years ago, running a weekly women's day with between 10 and 20 people attending. Now, in 1993, the project is based at four centres – the three Rutland community colleges (at Uppingham, Oakham and Great Casterton) and at Belvoir High School in north Leicestershire. Each programme runs for two days a week and well over 400 women are registered on the project as a whole, with between 30 and 40 attending any one centre on any one day. As well as eight crèche workers and about 40 specialist tutors, there are 12 women working as co-ordinators, outreach and educational guidance workers.

Problems, problems

The first and often most difficult problem to deal with is lack of transport. Public transport is, for many living in Rutland villages, non-existent. A number of women in the project's priority group do not have their own cars and even for those in families who do have cars, women very often do not have use of them during the day.

Transport is also a problem for those managing or working on the project, adding to the cost in terms of time and travel. It has also meant those employed on the project have to have their own transport.

A second major problem is the lack of childcare facilities. Only five per cent of local authority day nurseries and 11 per cent of local education authority nursery schools and classes are situated in rural areas, according to a national survey conducted by the Rural Development Commission in 1990 (NCVO 1991a). Childminders and nurseries are few and far between and access is further limited by transport difficulties and cost.

Low pay is an issue that the project team has worked hard to address. Pay rates for women are even lower in rural than in urban areas and job opportunities are limited. Work is mostly part-time and poorly paid. Again, problems are exacerbated by lack of transport, long travel time and high travel costs. In addition, women in rural areas have very few role models of other kinds of employment and this in itself reduces aspirations and ambitions.

Low pay is only one of the causes of rural poverty but it effectively prevents women taking part in education and training. Costs of transport, childcare and course fees can all be prohibitive. In rural areas, 25 per cent of households (20 per cent of the population) were on or below the poverty line in 1981. Available data suggest the percentage has risen rather than declined (NCVO 1991b).

A less easily quantifiable barrier to access in rural areas is isolation. 'The opportunities that women in rural areas have for casual contact and exchange of information have been greatly reduced and contribute to an increasing isolation.' (NAWO *et al.* 1992) This experience can limit women's expectations and ambitions. There is often no contact with or exposure to different groups and communities, to varied work opportunities or to experience of new skills or ideas. In many villages most people who work leave every day to work elsewhere and for those left at home, life revolves around one very small and insular community. It can be a difficult and sometimes dramatic change for many to take part in group activities in a new environment.

Strategies

The Women's Access Project has from the beginning been designed to include strategies to combat these problems.

The first and most obvious solution to the transport problem has been to site provision within rural communities and not on campus at Melton College. In the Melton/Rutland area, three community colleges for 11–16 year olds and a community centre have provided these vital bases and their active involvement, facilities and co-operation have been an essential ingredient of the project. This

does not, however, solve the problem entirely – community colleges and centres are themselves located in relatively small communities and access continues to be a problem for women from surrounding villages. Strategies employed locally have included the use of volunteer bureau drivers, lift-sharing schemes and introductory driving courses for participants. This last strategy has the added bonus of enabling women to gain a new skill and independence.

The solution to the problem of childcare has been to provide free crèche places at all four project centres. This, not surprisingly, has been successful, with demand on several occasions outstripping available places. Although there are alternative strategies, for example using childminders, in a rural area where facilities are so few and so scattered and transport already a problem, an on-site crèche has proved to be the solution that best meets the need and is least stressful and problematic for the women involved.

Free childcare is only one of the strategies employed in response to the need to keep the cost of the programme as low as possible for the women attending. Fees have been kept down to 65p per woman per day, paid weekly on attendance, thus avoiding the need for any lump sum payment. No one is turned away because she cannot pay – if necessary, the fee is waived altogether. Strategies to improve women's employment prospects include on-going educational guidance, individual records of achievement and information on alternative ways of working provided, for example, by the Co-operative Development Agency.

The experience of rural isolation means that for many women, social contact is an important element of the project, especially during the initial stages. The environment is designed to be welcoming and social contact is included as an integral part of the programme, for example, communal lunches, enhanced by extra-curricular group activities such as outward bound weekends, and by discussion groups and the use of lounge facilities over the lunch hour. Outside speakers and visits help extend the women's awareness of further training and job opportunities.

Management and organisation

The success with which these barriers to access have been identified and strategies designed to address them is illustrated by the large numbers of women attending the project. However, any notion that the project was simply advertised and 400 women arrived at the door needs to be dispelled. The management and organisation of the project are vital components of the project's success.

The role of the community colleges has been to run the programme, to provide premises for it and on-going support for staff and participants. The role of Melton Mowbray College has been that of facilitator, providing line management, support and resourcing and procuring long-term funding. Workers in a rural area are very

isolated. The existence of an experienced manager at an FE base provides the necessary level of support; the manager at Melton College, for example, organises regular team meetings, circulates information, responds to staff development needs and perhaps most importantly keeps in regular telephone and/or personal contact with workers. The role of the LEA has included providing some of the curriculum support and funding for the programme, and ensuring its community education service is being fully utilised to support the women's project.

While Melton College has provided the management framework, close collaboration with local organisations and institutions has been essential. This has included the community colleges and the centre where the project is based and local community groups and organisations including, for example, the Rutland Volunteer Bureau, adult basic education, Homestart, social services, the Library and Information Service, the RAF and the prison service. Experience has shown that 'parachuting' provision or workers in with little or no reference to the local rural context does not work and the FE college needs to call on local expertise and understanding. The success of the project as a whole and of each centre is the result of extensive outreach work in the community by experienced, locally based workers and of a sensitive response by co-ordinators and other team members to local needs and conditions.

The curriculum

The curriculum has been designed and developed by the Women's Access Project team. Activities begin at 10.00am and end at 3.00pm, to allow women to take and fetch children to and from school. There is a wide range of provision, both vocational and non-vocational. The project is centred on a core curriculum of literacy and numeracy skills (up to GCSE), information technology, assertiveness, communication skills, personal records of aims and achievements and educational guidance. All other activities are designed to enhance, or provide access to, the core programme and include, for example, GCSE English, NVQ Level I business and administration, City and Guilds interior design, job search skills, car maintenance and first aid. Some activities, for example keep fit and keyboard skills, are included primarily as loss leaders, attracting women initially to what is perceived as non-threatening and familiar but giving them the opportunity to move on to other activities as and when they are ready.

The project aims to maintain a balance between a planned curriculum and one that is demand-led and the supporting curriculum at each centre will vary, reflecting local needs and conditions.

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Funding

Securing funding is essential to the success of the project. The Women's Access Project has relied on funding from a number of sources, including Leicestershire Education Authority's special funding for work with unwaged adults, short-term funding from the Further Education Unit and in 1992/93 substantially increased funding from a consortium of Leicestershire Training and Enterprise Council, the Rural Development Commission and British Telecom. Closely linked to the project are an educational guidance project funded from the European Social Fund and a women into technology project funded by the local authority's economic development unit. The project has also been underpinned by some mainstream community education resourcing and staffing from the LEA and from Melton Mowbray College of FE. In addition, Leicestershire LEA's fee remission scheme for those in receipt of various benefits has been used.

This kind of patchwork of funding is time-consuming to secure and manage. In addition, because it is short-term it does not provide the secure base the project needs. It also means that those working on the project continue to be employed on short-term contracts and paid at an hourly rate (for between two and 16 hours a week). This is an unsatisfactory position both for the workers and for the project.

For 1993/94, the community colleges and centres have each successfully applied as external bodies to the Further Education Funding Council, via Melton Mowbray College, to fund the programme as a whole. Although this money is only guaranteed until July 1994, it will constitute the basis for permanent FEFC funding.

The Women's Access Project's success depends on collaboration, networking and the skill and commitment of the project team. It illustrates the way in which an FE college can successfully move out into its surrounding rural areas, providing a needed and valued resource to women who are unable, at least initially, to take part in mainstream, on-site further education.

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Chapter 12: Efficient and effective – and serving the community

Mary Sawyer

Non-vocational, unstructured, not facilitating progression, unable to increase its income, fitting better with leisure or with social services. In a word, peripheral. In another, dispensable. That was the general view of the work of the community education (CE) sections in Wirral Metropolitan College in 1989.

During the period of fundamental restructuring that followed, and particularly as the local education authority (LEA) budget declined dramatically, many assumed that the work would disappear. We were prey to all the pressures of the new finance-led, efficiency-orientated, market FE.

And yet we blossomed. It is at least arguable that the tension between market FE and service to communities was for us a creative one, and that financial pressures and hard performance indicators have led to an improvement in our service. Even in 1989 the unflattering view of CE was far from uniformly true, but the years since then have seen real changes both in the provision and in others' perception of it. The CE staff, at first driven by internal financial pressures and by the general direction of the college, but increasingly also by an emerging perception of community needs and demands, have developed far tighter planning, delivery and evaluation mechanisms. A new approach and visible success have moved CE from the periphery to the centre of the college's plans.

Between September and November 1992, the 13 full-time CE academic staff (six in 1989) and five full-time community workers were responsible for half the enrolments of this very large college. Our programme consists of a range of part-time provision for adults, which takes place mainly at neighbourhood sites, but also includes some evening and weekend provision on main sites. CE includes fee-bearing classes ranging from watercolour painting to RSA stage III word processing and from navigation to beginners' Japanese. There is an access programme of free provision aimed at groups or areas with particular education/training needs, and there is a significant amount of externally-funded work, focused especially on pre-vocational training and guidance. CE staff also manage the very

large GCSE and A level evening programme jointly with staff of the continuing general education faculty, and are involved in plans to develop locally-based HE and access programmes from 1993. Tutor training in modern languages, and in adult basic education, and a Prince's Trust Volunteers franchise are other aspects of community education provision at Wirral Metropolitan College.

Increasing income through an amended fee structure

Financial pressures on CE came early in Wirral: in 1990 the budget was cut by £100,000. This was about the same as the net marginal cost of our very large fee-bearing adult education programme; it was considerably more than our total part-time budget for the access programmes. We set out to raise the £100,000 from fees, principally by abolishing the policy of automatic full fee remission for the over 60s whilst retaining it for people of all ages with genuinely low incomes. We had to examine the structure of our student body with a new rigour – ages, addresses and likely income groups, and enrolment patterns across a very diverse borough. We had to establish a rapid and efficient monitoring system, that would warn us as early as possible of any financial shortfall. We had to plan a programme that would maximise enrolments – by paying close attention to changing demands, by sharing waiting lists across the borough, and by offering progression opportunities – and we had to collect student and tutor perceptions of programmes early in the autumn in order to address problems and to maximise re-enrolment at Christmas. At no point were we prepared to consider seriously anything less than full fee remission for people receiving income support, family credit or unemployment benefit, or pensioners with equivalent income levels. Nor did we shift the balance of provision from less to more affluent areas. We aimed to preserve an equitable service across Wirral by coherent planning and efficient management. In two years we doubled our income on fee-bearing classes whilst fees rose only at the rate of inflation, the number of class hours per week remained stable and the number of people under 60 claiming fee remission rose, partly as a result of mounting unemployment but also as the changing curriculum was perceived by younger, poorer people as increasingly relevant. I would argue that we were originally forced by financial constraints to rethink; that we created a far more efficient structure; and that in doing so we improved our service to communities.

Reviewing the programme for efficiency and progression

In facing a financial threat we also became far more effective educationally. We considered our programme as a whole, rather than planning on a fragmented, centre-by-centre basis, and identified a core of provision that should be available in each area. Financial efficiency overall now enables us to offer GCSEs and a range of fee-bearing IT and office skills programmes in poorer areas away from main college sites, despite the fact that we know these particular classes will not

cover their marginal costs. Financial planning enables us more confidently to play Robin Hood.

In 1990 we also began to address progression issues. We could not, for example, offer a post-beginner language class in every centre in every language, yet while every beginner class covered a separate syllabus, transition to a post-beginner class elsewhere was the point at which many students dropped out. We began to describe, structure and accredit a community education curriculum in languages and in a range of other subject areas across Wirral.

By abandoning the old and expensive centre principal system, we had created in 1990 five full-time development worker posts – full-time lecturers with 11 hours' weekly remission from teaching in order to support particular geographical and subject areas. These development workers held meetings with part-time tutors and then established working parties which produced a record of what was currently being taught and models for analysing the levels and learning outcomes of courses. This has enabled us to develop accreditation schemes, either internally or externally validated, as well as facilitating progression. In languages three levels of programme were described, compatible with progression to GCSE. Language enrolments and, more significantly, re-enrolments have increased. Financially it is efficient and as an educational approach it seems effective.

Yet even the great change in the financial position of the fee-bearing programme could only safeguard the rate-borne access budget; it could not increase it, despite the needs increasingly clearly highlighted as CE staff developed more systematic links with local communities. Although parts of Wirral are leafy, affluent retirement and commuter areas, the eastern part of the peninsular along the Mersey and outlying council estates along the motorway is characterised by male unemployment rates up to 40 per cent, and by low take-up of education and training. There has been a steady decline in traditional industries, including those related to the docks and to shipbuilding, Cammell Laird is finally to close, and there is at present a rundown in some newer areas, including government offices and insurance. Inner area wards of Birkenhead have higher unemployment levels than Liverpool, large numbers of people with a wide range of special needs are being returned under the Care in the Community initiative, and the area is still nationally known for its drugs-related problems.

In order to use the very limited access budget as effectively as possible we introduced more systematic review mechanisms. Every outreach activity is now evaluated termly by students and by the area section team and issues arising from this process are discussed in more broadly-based CE staff meetings. An annual review day involves all full-time staff as well as part-time administrators who are often more aware of some dimensions of community education than the academic staff. Proposals for new provision are measured against a general policy statement

written by the community education staff, and against specific criteria agreed by the whole team and made explicit to community groups and to professionals in other organisations. Even informal access provision, for example, must have a clear educational rationale and defined target outcomes, should not duplicate provision by other agencies, and must maximise the potential for inter-agency planning and resourcing. If resources are committed, it is in the light of agreed target groups and timescales. We have found that short-term (and therefore cheaper) programmes have been both popular with potential students and educationally effective; six week spelling courses, for example, have attracted and retained students in areas where new, open-ended ABE classes have failed to establish themselves. Perhaps new adult learners find a limited time commitment and clearly identified learning outcomes more comfortable. After the short initial course a group, or individual students, may choose to make a longer-term commitment, and the team has information to underpin a more confident decision. Yet even then students welcome support in setting themselves specific goals, often including external accreditation.

However, it has never been financially possible to create new, discrete provision for each new group we work with. Within the financial constraints of the last three years, and with increasing demand, this option has been ever more limited. It has been more financially viable to use limited resources to offer guidance and support which enable people in some priority groups to access existing facilities. Money spent on outreach guidance work has resulted in more people joining programmes than the same amount spent on discrete group provision for some types of learner – and has also better served individuals' needs.

This approach has, for example, underpinned our work both with people with learning difficulties and with people recovering from a period of substance abuse. Whilst many Wirral people with learning difficulties derive very great benefit from a wide variety of discrete courses, often delivered in day or residential centres, others have, like all adults, their own particular interests and the potential, with support, to attend mainstream adult education classes. Last year, a part-time member of staff supporting both students and tutors had a case-load of students in integrated classes equivalent to 10 students per two hour session. In a college where a student:staff ratio of six to one is an acceptable minimum for many special needs groups this not only opened up new opportunities for local residents, but was also highly cost-effective.

Equally, work with clients of various drug rehabilitation agencies has focused on raising awareness of existing education and training opportunities and on supporting the development of confidence and decision-making skills. Within the rehabilitation centres we have run courses in survival budgeting and cookery and in one we have delivered a life skills programme funded by Wirral Task Force, but we have consistently funded an outreach information and guidance worker as the core of

our service. She has encouraged women recovering from tranquillizer addiction to join second chance courses; ex-heroin users have joined the access to HE programme and gone on to university; many have found the college's open learning centres a non-threatening first step back into previously truncated education. A limited budget has perhaps prevented us making stereotyped decisions about needs and increasing discrete provision; it has encouraged us to maximise the use of existing resources.

Maximising external funding, and learning to live with performance indicators

Even improved management of access resources, however, had in itself a very limited contribution to make to the overall availability of community education; only external funding could enable us significantly to extend our provision in areas or subjects where we could not rely on fees to cover costs. The main sources of external finance in our area, apart from the TEC, are Wirral Task Force and City Challenge; yet these are central government funding mechanisms dependent on the setting and attaining of closely defined target enrolments and quantifiable outcomes – qualifications achieved, employment gained, progression to vocational training. The work that we had done in reorganising and restructuring our existing programmes gave us a basis of experience on which to draw in designing proposals for our first Task Force funding, but the pressure of meeting very specific deadlines and targets further sharpened our focus on curriculum design, student support and delivery. If a student attending an outreach centre for five hours per week had 12 weeks to achieve RSA CLAIT I the teacher had to keep scrupulous records, materials had to be well-designed, the computers had to be in working order, and the crèche workers had to turn up. Across the board we were committed to efficiency.

Likewise, if a student studying basic maths was not going to achieve a City and Guilds numeracy qualification after 12 weeks we needed to monitor and map achievement in some other way. The college's 'learning framework' will by next year record possible learning outcomes across every programme in every faculty: the community education ABE co-ordinator made a major contribution to the ABE elements of the learning framework and these helped staff both to establish a starting point and to describe progress – however small the steps by which some students initially move. Only by accepting the validity of Wirral Task Force's parameters were we able to enter into a genuine dialogue about reasonable target numbers, acceptable outcomes, and the relationship of core skills to vocational training. The result of this dialogue has been not only to increase community education in Wirral – for on the basis of our experience with Task Force we were able to bid successfully for substantial City Challenge funding – but also, we believe, to improve the quality of our service.

Valuing vocational education

It may be argued that the availability of finance has pushed community education in Wirral towards pre-vocational and vocational education at the expense of provision for creative and practical needs, and that this trend will be increased by the funding mechanisms of the FEFC. However, the vocational orientation demanded by funders has actually matched demand in the areas of highest unemployment and has greatly increased and broadened take-up. In central Birkenhead, where free dressmaking and cookery classes have struggled to survive, typing and IT were full by the second week of the City Challenge project. In fee-bearing classes also, office skills, computing, language and GCSE classes are bulging, while the creative arts, textile and health and fitness programmes, cut by over 30 per cent in 1992, are those with vacancies. In Wirral's areas of large scale, long-term unemployment the priority for most adults is to improve their chance of finding, or of remaining in, employment and there is growing awareness of the significance of vocationally relevant education and training. In more affluent areas many of the women who have traditionally attended non-vocational classes are now themselves in employment, many are focusing on languages rather than on craft subjects, and others' long-term aims are vocational or academic.

For the practical and recreational education which still interests a great many people, there are alternative providers; Wirral's Leisure Services Department is highly entrepreneurial, the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) is very active, there is a successful independent adult college and a growing number of erstwhile part-time college tutors are successfully establishing private classes – many of them seeking to avoid what have been widely heralded as the results of the Further and Higher Education Act, or in direct response to the cuts forced on the college in 1992.

Efficiency has its limits

As well as hurting the fee-bearing programme, the 1992/93 disastrous fall of £1.7m in LEA funding for Wirral Metropolitan College gravely damaged our provision for people with learning difficulties; it has made it impossible for us to undertake new work with parent groups; it saw the end of basic cookery classes in drug rehabilitation and other community centres. Gross underfunding clearly damages services to communities. There are no 100 per cent efficiency savings other than extinction for work which cannot cover any of its costs, and there has been no silver lining except the gradual realisation across the community and local authority of the value of what was lost.

Yet even this year we have survived, and in many areas have grown. Ever since 1989, we have had to change in order to survive. We have had to respond to priorities set by our paymasters, both individual students and institutions; we have

had to manage resources well. Until the cuts we had to make in September 1992, the relevance and quality of the whole service improved. Clearly a focus on relevance and quality should always be inherent in education – but the pressures we have faced have, I suspect, forced us more quickly to overcome the barriers to change presented by scattered provision, part-time staffing, and the entrenched interests of many groups.

And after all that, incorporation

Some of the biggest barriers to change have been found within the mainstream college. Despite our progress in reorganising and enhancing community education, we had difficulty integrating our offer with that of the rest of the college. The adult curriculum and access for adults were often seen as fragmented and haphazard at the point where adults moved from community to mainstream, although the college had begun to address these issues through the learning framework and through individual learner records.

Incorporation, with the necessity for wholesale revision of strategic plans, for the identification of targets and for great changes in internal resource allocation, could have presented CE with its greatest threat. Yet our fundamentally healthy financial position, our success in attracting high-profile external funding, and our reputation for sound management are reflected in the core role accorded CE in the college's new plan. Two of the new strategic objectives are effectively those which CE staff set for themselves last year:

- to achieve integration in all respects between neighbourhood and main site provision; and
- to expand its continuing education and training provision within neighbourhood and other centres as well as on main college sites.

The local authority, after a period of uncertainty, is contracting with us to deliver its remaining non-Schedule 2 provision, on the grounds that the college will deliver the best value and most extensive service for the limited funding available. We shall we able to restore at least some of the 1992/93 non-Schedule 2 cuts without any of the disproportionate fee increases predicted in other areas. In Wirral, the tension between finance-led, efficiency-orientated, market FE and service to communities has indeed turned out to be a creative one. It has put us in a stronger position than many services to face the uncertainties and opportunities ahead.

Chapter 13: Ireland: serving a divided community

Peter Shanahan

This chapter looks at the work of the Magee Community Development Studies Unit, offering a description of the Magee programme, and outlining some of the unresolved issues in such work. The unit is based at the University of Ulster at Magee College, Derry, but the programme also involves other universities in Ireland, both north and south, making it highly innovatory.

The Magee Unit recently won the Shell UK Prize for Open Learning. The prize is one of the Partnership Awards sponsored by the Council for Industry and Higher Education; the purpose is to stimulate innovation in higher education. The prize assessors had this to say:

> In an area of high unemployment, the unit offers mature students, of varying educational background, a tertiary course ratified by the university. Through the application of management principles and business skills, the participants have been able to organise community projects into stand-alone co-operatives. The course has raised the confidence of many individuals, and made them realise that they can exert an influence through bringing about social change... The project has done much to enhance the partnership between Magee College and the community. (Comment of the Assessors, Shell UK Prize for Open Learning.)

Introduction

Ireland is a divided society. However, the divisions in Ireland not only reflect the usual divisions of any other EC country but also those most often encountered in other post-colonial areas of the Third World (Memmi 1990, O'Dowd 1991). In addition to the common, structural divisions of advantage and disadvantage such as class, gender, race, peripherality, disability and age, the island of Ireland has been divided between north (UK Northern Ireland) and south (Republic of Ireland). In addition, the north has been divided between unionist (mainly Protestant and

British) and nationalist (mainly Catholic and Irish) since its foundation in 1922, and this division is further accentuated by class.

Since 1987, the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council has co-ordinated most aspects of community relations policy in the Province and provides financial assistance for cross-community initiatives, including community education. Community relations practitioners recently reported that they faced many issues, one of which is 'the critique offered community relations work by those groups in search of a more just, equitable and less violent society'. The workers ask:

> Can one be anti-sectarian *vis-à-vis* attitudes and behaviour whilst being oblivious to the institutions, legislation and power strata which nourish and sustain sectarianism? (Journal 1992)

In such a divided society, colleges of higher education in Ireland – both north and south – are not immune to the effects of these divisions. Their constituencies, as well as their staff, include all the divisions. For instance, the two universities in Northern Ireland have been criticised by the state-appointed Fair Employment Agency for unfair recruitment practice. Furthermore, many aspects of education are affected by the chronic political weakness of class ideologies in local politics, the almost total absence of any consensus on the nature of the state and the absence of consensus on the legitimacy of political violence to achieve social change. In a particularly poignant way, such lack of consensus affects the theoretical and ideological bases of adult and community education (Morrow and Moreland 1992). The provision of a theory which might adequately underpin a university adult education/community development unit in Northern Ireland today taxes both the integrity of the adult educator and the effectiveness of the exercise for which she/he has responsibility.

Our Derry-based university unit attempts to address the sectarian and class divisions in Northern Ireland in two, practical ways:

- it seeks to bridge the gap between the university and unwaged people who are voluntarily involved in community development in their neighbourhoods (both nationalist and unionist, urban and rural) in the west-north-west of the Province; and
- it seeks to address the north-south divide by co-ordinating the resources of University College, Galway, and the University of Ulster for the greater benefit of their respective, unwaged students of whatever creed.

In a context of male unemployment rates of up to 70 per cent in some local neighbourhoods, the unit seems to have had some success in bridging the university/unwaged gap, and it is this factor which most impressed the three education consultants employed by Shell UK when they visited the Magee programme. They were impressed by the ease with which unwaged, voluntary workers from

disadvantaged neighbourhood groups and projects in the City and rural hinterland could approach the university and the staff. This rapport, rarely seen between these two worlds, allows the university programme to address, albeit in a limited way, the issues which the participants from the working-class neighbourhoods have defined as important to them. This sense of 'belonging' to the university on their part is probably the most important factor in any effectiveness the programme may have.

The Magee Unit also addresses the division between north and south. Since completing the innovatory, cross-border, action research work between 1987 and 1989, the unit has helped to co-ordinate the resources of three universities on both sides of the border for the benefit of their unwaged students and voluntary community development efforts. Four university campuses on the island are now involved through their adult education provision for the unwaged: the University of Ulster at Magee College, Derry; the University of Ulster at the Ulster People's College, Belfast; Maynooth University College; and University College, Galway. Since 1987, the EC has provided about £3.5m to these institutions for the work.

The programme

The community development studies course is a mixture of critical education with basic vocational training, validated by the University of Ulster and responsible to an external examiner. This curriculum 'concoction' is advocated by the Council of Europe for adult education with the long-term unemployed (Engelhardt 1990). 40 unwaged people (mostly voluntary community workers) attend Magee College for 40 weeks each year. Two days each week are spent in the college and three days in the community. In the college they take five theoretical, compulsory modules of study, one compulsory module on research skills and a choice of 10 optional skills courses. In addition, they have joint education/training with University College, Galway, and an ERASMUS student mobility programme with 11 EC universities is available. Furthermore, through the EC-INTERREG Rural Development Education and Training Project (which is also organised by the unit in the west of the Province) students on the present programme are exposed to the distinctiveness of the rural dimension of community development and engage, more and more, in the environmental and the rural-urban debate.

However, the taught course elements (both theory and skills) are seen as subordinate to the important project work of the student in the community.

This practical project by the participant is an exercise, however basic, in participatory action research. That is to say, it is an effort by the unwaged person (or group) at investigating reality in order to change it; an effort by unwaged persons, and the community group to which they may be attached, to gain control over their own lives. This participatory action research work by the student is

evaluated by the tutors and by the external examiner and constitutes 50 per cent of the final mark. The actual presentation of the project can be offered in different modes: written report/proposal, drama, video, photographic material. It is hoped that these modes can be extended next year to incorporate more of the community arts.

The criteria for the evaluation of the participants' projects fall under three main headings:

- individual motivation criterion: to what degree is the student really involved in the community/project?
- community utilitarian criterion: to what degree does the project contribute, or potentially contribute, to assisting the process whereby people gain control over their own lives?
- university academic criterion: conceptual analysis, coherence and structure, presentation and style, research, knowledge creation and/or knowledge access.

The people and their projects

Examples of people and their projects are given here, using an adaptation of models of intervention offered elsewhere (Rothman and Tropman 1987, Shanahan 1980)

Community enterprise

Kay, a middle-aged mother from the Bogside, left school at an early age and, at the time of recruitment to the course, was involved as a voluntary community worker and craft worker. Kay came to the course wanting to learn more about co-operatives, particularly a co-operative to make Irish dance costumes. During the year her interest in this particular co-operative decreased and, with another woman, she developed an idea to establish her own sewing business, which has been very successful. However, in spite of her changed involvement, Kay made a video promoting the Irish Dance Costumes Co-operative which was shown with effect at trade fairs in the USA. The co-operative has since ceased trading but Kay's business continues.

Community service

Hazel, a mother from the (Protestant) Fountain Estate with a number of adopted children, left school at an early age. She has done much voluntary work with the Peace and Reconciliation Group which liaises between the police and the community. As such, she has much experience in dealing with volatile situations demanding serious judgment. She came on the course to do a project on community relations and ended up making an important contribution to an on-going rural

development project outside the city, which has as its base a community relations objective. Her project consisted of undertaking a survey of the communities in question. Quite recently, she has been employed as a full-time worker for the NSPCC.

Community development

Conor, an unemployed father and voluntary community worker from a rural community 50 miles from the college, came to the course with a post-graduate education completed in the USA. Due to his background, he had very little chance of getting employment. His project attempted to examine the potential for integrated community development in his own rural community over the next decade, especially in areas such as agro-tourism, with a view to combating emigration by utilising local resources to generate more employment. Since Conor completed this project five years ago, his rural community has developed substantially in the face of enormous obstacles and has received funding from the International Fund for Ireland and from government agencies to develop its infrastructure. After the course, he found a position with an established voluntary agency. He now works as a full-time development officer for a government agency.

Community campaign

Kathleen had been educated in the Republic of Ireland and had left school at 16. She was married with three children and living in Letterkenny, County Donegal, immediately prior to the course. She moved to Derry with her children to benefit from the better social services available there for a single woman. She became involved in the women's movement. With another woman from the Bogside, Kathleen became interested in the subject of incest. They undertook a joint survey on the problem and then decided to publicise their findings in the community through the medium of a video. They completed the video and produced it to a high standard. The video included interviews with local sexually-abused women and caused intense debate between the church agencies and the state agency. Kathleen could have gone forward for a university degree but declined and is now involved voluntarily in the community.

By graduation in June 1993, 260 unwaged voluntary workers from urban and rural areas of the north-west of the Province will have passed through the programme in Magee.

The philosophy and purposes of the unit

The unit is underpinned by the assumption, articulated by the existentialist philosopher Karl Jaspers, that man/woman only feels at home in an environment which she/he has helped to create. The project of self-realisation, therefore, entails

constructing and reconstructing the human environment (social, cultural, political, and economic) through the externalisation of human consciousness.

In addition to these existentialist notions, the unit's philosophy is influenced by a social and political commitment to egalitarianism. It belongs to the radical tradition which seeks to relate adult education to social transformation in the interests of the working class and those deprived in terms of gender, race, peripherality and marginality, age and disability. This radicalism was tempered in the 1980s by growing unemployment and the demand from the unwaged voluntary community workers themselves for an adult education and training provision related to acquiring or creating jobs for themselves 'in the community'. There was a growing conviction, too, that radical adult education had consigned itself to the limbo of utopianism (Evans 1987), and that adult education had to demonstrate to the authorities its commitment to incrementalism and its relevance to the socio-economic and political problems of 'advanced' capitalist society (Fletcher 1980). Thus, the liberal/radical tradition of Tawney, Freire, Illich and Lovett was presented in newer forms and terminology and was influenced by the long-standing practice in many countries of the Third World of relating adult education and 'socio-cultural tradition' to development. This latter relationship between adult education and development became the basic argument of the Council of Europe projects on adult education in the 1980s (James 1982, 1986).

A version of alternative development thinking and the notions of 'sustainable development' (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987, Henderson 1990), 'knowledge democracy' (Gaventa 1988), 'people-centred development' (Korten and Klauss 1984), and 'participatory action research' (Gaventa 1988) allows those engaged in re-defining the radical tradition in adult education to emphasise the relevance of people-centred planning. This is particularly important in the development of deprived neighbourhoods and the potential economic and social contribution which grass-roots initiatives might make to the regeneration of society, which is the project of the state. This advocacy position on the part of those engaged in this re-defining process attracts those authorities whose desire it is to individualise and integrate the marginalised into the present socio-economic system and who see adult education as a way of harnessing the energies of the unwaged and marginalised in the interests of efficiency and, perhaps, social stability (Stern 1990).

In a general sense, the Magee Unit incorporates these two 'discourses': the discourse of the integrationists and the discourse of the transformationists. The dialogue thus established is expressed in the curriculum where critical education and radical social analysis are combined with vocational skills training. The Chawama Self-help Housing Project (Narine 1986, Shanahan and Andrews 1975, Shanahan 1976) acts as a prototype for me.

The unit's aims may be summarised as:

- **self-realisation:** the enabling of the individual, unwaged person to strive for human fulfilment and self-actualisation;
- **community economic development and training:** the enabling, facilitation and support of community enterprises through innovative education and training of unwaged community voluntary workers involved in specific, single-issue, neighbourhood initiatives which have employment potential in terms of the production of socially-useful goods and services;
- **community development:** the creation of enabling settings which encourage and support people's efforts to meet their own needs and to solve their own problems at individual, family and neighbourhood levels with their own knowledge, skills and resources; augmenting these with the knowledge, skills and resources of the university, the state and voluntary bodies; developing organisational structures and processes that function according to the principles of self-organising systems; and eventually developing territorially-organised production-consumption systems based on local ownership and control (Korten and Klauss 1984, McClenaghan and Shanahan 1989, Shanahan 1992a).
- **networking and social policy development:** the enabling and empowerment of community networks organised by structurally underprivileged neighbourhoods and groups at local, regional, and international levels and the changing of social and economic policy in the interests of those groups through knowledge and power.

Tensions and issues in the Magee Community Development Studies Unit

This work is not without its difficulties.

The tension of dual orientation: college and community orientation

> Sometimes they [the staff in the Magee Unit] forget that people come to the course with something to offer. (O'Neill 1992, quoting an ex-participant, an active voluntary community worker.)

A constant effort is needed to prevent the programme becoming a college-based programme only. The college-based education/training programme is but 'one leg' of the programme. The 'second leg', which is absolutely essential to the long-term effectiveness of such programmes, is the wide, community-based education/training involvement of all staff. This dual experience of community and college provides important, creative tension in the curriculum and its development both for the staff and the students. The demands of the ever-changing and often unspecified developmental needs of grass-roots initiatives in disadvantaged

neighbourhoods often clash dialectically with the bureaucratic and academic constraints of a validated university programme, which is encased in a hierarchical structure. Without constant criticism of the curriculum and the teaching methods, the community orientation of the programme will be neglected.

The tension of dual purpose and dual funding: academic and development/training purposes

The unit is funded from two sources: the university and the EC. It thus reflects the purposes of both these institutions. Recent interviews with past students show evidence of their ambiguity and tension with regard to the purpose of their year's study in Magee.

> We come in [to the college] and you and Hilary tell us that the purpose of the course is to assist us to develop a community project. But then you start correcting our essays and criticising our spellings and how we write the essays and how we research. What's the community studies course for? I enjoyed it, mind. But I'm still not clear what it is about. (Terry McNamee, an ex-student.)

I consider this to be a serious criticism and one which provides valuable, creative tension leading, hopefully, to curriculum change and growth within the university system in the context of the changes brought about by the shift from élite to mass higher education.

The unit's work is based on the notion that the unwaged voluntary workers in their own families, neighbourhoods and social environments possess the knowledge and skills to survive under conditions of severe hardship and to solve the day-to-day problems confronting them. How can this knowledge and these goals be accommodated in a validated programme in an academic institution such as a university? Addressing this question entails changing the attitudes and systems of the university in relation to accommodating and 'validating' this 'new' knowledge as well as changing public policy-makers' opinions in relation to the value of such knowledge and in making more resources available to these neighbourhoods.

From radical action to voluntarism for the state. Is the programme for social change or community management?

The observation has been made that the community groups which use the Magee Unit:

> Exist to obtain a better deal from the state bureaucracy rather than possess a commitment to radical social change. For social change to occur there must at least be the creation and diffusion of critical ideas which challenge the élites which make up the status quo. This is a central question for adult

> education courses, such as community studies, as to whether or not they are focused upon education for transformation or simply a training course funded by the European Social Fund and as such the course acts as an appendage to the academic establishment. (O'Neill 1992)

In contrast, my contention is that some of the most energetic voluntary work in the community is done by activists in local expressions of international social movements and some of these people use the Magee Unit programme and resources: the trade union movement, the women's movement, the ecological movement and the ethnic revival movement. These groups, by their very nature, address structural issues with structural strategies and the curriculum of the programme reflects a critical structural analysis of advantage and disadvantage in contemporary Europe and the world.

I concede, however, that an analysis of the themes of student project work in the unit since 1982 leads to the conclusion that there is a noticeable trend from conflict to co-operation; from community campaign issues to community service provision. For me and others this is important – and negative (Panet-Raymond 1987, Shanahan *et al.* 1989). It is important that groups committed to structural change feel they can use the Magee programme. However, when they do so, the university programme is vulnerable to the criticism that it may be used by the state to change and bureaucratise such groups. As Craig has stated (1989), community development is inevitably involved in the messy issues of authority and legitimacy. These issues need to be made explicit in an adult education programme located in a university. Such a programme needs to wrestle with the dilemma of finding itself 'between street and state' and to strive to maintain its critical dimension in the face of the pressures towards political conformism, routinisation and bureaucratisation (Kinduka 1987, Shanahan 1992b).

University adult education, jobs and the redefinition of work

'Do they get jobs?', enquired the EC auditor.

'Yes and no,' replied the adult educator cheerfully and ambiguously.

The EC auditor frowned.

The unit gets its funding from the EC as a local economic development training initiative with unwaged people. The evaluation of the same is fraught with problems, not least due to 'the absence of a comprehensive theory of local economic development' (O'Cinneide and Keane 1990). Without such a theory, evaluators may report positively or negatively on a local initiative, depending on the methodology used. Tight financial analysis and broader economic evaluation lead to entirely different conclusions as to the usefulness of a particular local initiative. The usual perspective employed is that of export base theory which defines local

economic growth in terms of changes in the local levels of output, income and employment (O'Cinneide and Keane 1990). The success of a project is then measured in terms of the number of small and medium sized enterprises and the improvement of local infrastructures and services. Such an approach to development is inadequate and even alien to the view of alternative economic development (Henderson 1990), people-centred development (Korten and Klauss 1984), and even the notion of sustainable development (WCED 1987), which underpins the project of this unit.

However, the unit accepts that it must be evaluated by tight financial analysis, and while the evaluation of the relationship between any training programme and employment prospects is itself fraught with problems, the unit staff are moderately confident that they can justify expenditure even within a tight, financial analysis. This belief is encouraged by the fact that three external evaluations have already been carried out on the unit's work, which were basically positive.

Between 20 and 30 per cent of graduates acquire waged work in the formal economy (mainly in the community sector and mostly of a temporary nature) within months of completing the course. Between 10 and 15 per cent become involved in creating jobs through co-operatives and other businesses. Another 10 per cent at least are economically active in the non-formal economy in various enterprises, and such activities may overlap with a full-time job and/or the setting up of a community enterprise. 10 per cent go on to further education. About 30 per cent continue to be actively involved in unwaged voluntary work in the community and there is some evidence that the experience of the course may influence people away from voluntary work. There is a drop-out rate of about 10 per cent but due to European Social Fund requirements, all drop-outs are replaced almost immediately.

However, such a narrow consideration of the issue at hand is inadequate. The unit seeks to question the very definition of work and this questioning requires one to recognise that work and paid employment are not synonymous (James 1986). In fact, those who engage in unpaid activities often work harder than those in paid jobs.

The unit addresses the issue of the redefinition of work in two ways: it seeks to increase the range and number of community enterprises of all sorts, and to secure greater status for voluntary work in the community and the work done in households and elsewhere.

Conclusion

This chapter has been about work in the north of Ireland, but this has been informed by ideas and experiences from around the world. Despite the very particular context in which we operate, I am sure the problems we confront are not

entirely foreign to those involved in community development in further and higher education wherever they may be, and I am optimistic that the approach we have adopted will be of general value as well.

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Section D: How others deliver the goods

Chapter 14: Serving the community: community colleges in the USA
Norman Evans

Chapter 15: An education and an economy for survival: committed to communities in Latin America
Carlos Tamez Luna in conversation with Sue Gardener and Les Brook. Translation by John Payne

Chapter 14: Serving the community: community colleges in the USA

Norman Evans

Background

Some of the most impressive educational leaders are to be found as presidents and vice-presidents of US community colleges, with a strict sense of vocation driving them to improve the service that their college provides. Among the things which makes them impressive is their ethical stance, their commitment to their community. The best of them would not give a thank you for working in a university. They take great pride in the quality of education they offer, whether at basic literacy or high flier level. They spurn academic drift. Aping universities is no part of serving their community. High standards in whatever they do for whoever becomes a student is what they strive for. It is a noble ideal for education in the community.

Of course, American community colleges work in their own particular community context, in a different culture where, historically, the role of government has been different. The number and range of community and voluntary groups is far more extensive than in the UK. So community colleges have a recognisable American ring to them. Nevertheless, they can provide some useful pointers for the development of education in the community in Britain in considering some of the ways they attempt to organise and manage their affairs.

Although there are some features common to all community colleges, there are huge variations in practice – and just as with education institutions anywhere in the world, they range from the excellent through the adequate to the poor. Examples of good practice are not to be found in all American community colleges, whether the college is located in a downtown urban area with a heavy participation rate from minority groups and where there are likely to be fresh influxes of immigrants, or in suburbia or in predominantly white areas. Individualised learning opportunities, learning centres offering multi-media versions of courses, close collaboration with voluntary and community groups offering their own education and training programmes, and credit rating of companies' in-house training

programmes can all be found in some colleges as they attempt to be true to their mission.

The community colleges were established by a federal law designed to extend opportunities for studying at post-secondary level, and authorising state legislatures to fund community colleges by raising money through taxation. They were to be open access institutions, with the responsibility of meeting the needs of whoever came through the door. They were to offer regular courses lasting two years (or its equivalent) and leading to the award of an associate degree. Their degrees were to include requirements for studying the liberal arts, whatever their vocational flavour. They were to offer non-credit courses both vocational and non-vocational. (The way these courses are funded differs from state to state. Sometimes they are fully funded, sometimes they are self-financing and, increasingly, similar criteria to those in prospect here are used to determine eligibility for funding so institutions try to adopt creative definitions of their provision.) They were to be non-residential, and they were to be cheaper than other forms of higher education.

Arrangements varied from state to state but during the 1960s, community colleges were the fastest growing sector of education, being created at the rate of one a day. In New York State, Governor Rockefeller wanted a community college within 30 miles travelling distance of everyone in the state. There are now 30 colleges. In California, the number of colleges grew as the population grew, and until very recently tuition was free. In Delaware, local communities agitated until the state legislature authorised their establishment.

Funding community colleges

There are three required sources of funding, though proportions vary from state to state: money raised through state taxation; some earmarked subventions from the federal government and from the county where the college is located; and income from the tuition fees payable by students to the college. Annual budgets have to be approved and agreed by both state and county, including setting the level of tuition fees to be paid, which makes for a complicated and contentious series of negotiations. There is an obvious implication in terms of their own public accountability for state and county politicians.

That threefold source of income points to important aspects of managing and leading community colleges in the US. The financial health of a college depends on its political skill in keeping its educational provision in step with the changing needs of the people in its area, liaising carefully with employers and being alert to changing patterns of employment and more recently unemployment, keeping demographic changes under continual review for enrolment predictions, monitoring changes in the ethnic backgrounds of the local population, and taking note of the effect on its community of the local and national economy.

For example, some colleges, like Delaware Community College (adjacent to Philadelphia) have noted the increasing difficulty parents experience (largely in the more affluent parts of its county) in meeting the rising expense of tuition and board at universities offering four year degrees. The community college's tuition and fees are far lower and it has been quick to respond to its own surveys from high schools and pressure from parents by offering courses to school leavers which are acceptable for credit towards a bachelor degree. Parents then face expensive university tuition and fees for only two years instead of four. To accomplish this the college has established articulation agreements with universities to ensure the acceptability of their courses for transfer. This has been so successful that the college has literally run out of space.

But the president worries about the service his college can give to the rising numbers of unemployed in other parts of his county and his inability to give them the service they need. They too are his mission. Government-funded training programmes are as complicated to deal with as here, with their criteria, bureaucratic procedures, annual low level of funding and, hence, their uncertainty making longer-term planning well nigh impossible. Attempting to run such programmes may be financially impractical. The tension between finance-led, efficiency-orientated, market-infused provision and service to communities can be acute.

The equivalent in the UK could be colleges vigorously pursuing franchise arrangements. Being quick to seize the chance of increasing enrolments and, therefore, securing income obviously runs the risk of giving a bias to an institution's provision so that it begins to emphasise service to one part of its community at the expense of another. Business ethics applied to education is no easy matter on either side of the Atlantic.

Widening access: Bunker Hill Community College

In some areas of the United States there has been a dramatic change in the range of ethnic backgrounds as large numbers of immigrants have arrived from all over the Far East, Central America and Europe. In some colleges, admission arrangements, the curriculum and education advice services have all changed almost out of recognition to cope with the new demands presented by these different categories of students, for whom English is often not their first language. Bunker Hill Community College in urban Boston enrols students from 66 countries with native languages which include Russian, Spanish, Vietnamese, Khmer, Haitian, French and Chinese. They represent about two-fifths of the 5,000 plus total enrolment. The average student is aged between 28 and 33 and takes three and a half years to complete the requirements for the two year associate degree. Most have either full-time or nearly full-time jobs. The introduction to the college catalogue is printed in five languages.

The learning centre plays a crucial role in enabling the college to try to serve such a varied community. It provides both diagnostic facilities and multi-media resources for individualised, independent, self-paced learning supervised by trained staff. This is a purpose-designed area where courses taught in classrooms are available in other learning modes (tape/slide, interactive computer programmes, video, distance learning materials) and can be studied at a time convenient to the student who makes a booking in advance for whatever is required. Dozens of the college's courses have been developed in this way. Special project funding provided the initial start up costs, but the college's continuing financial support for extending provision in the learning centre indicates its commitment to the older students in its area.

Community colleges generally are increasingly having to face the problem of declining levels of achievement in secondary high schools. This has meant that some community colleges, such as Bunker Hill, have introduced testing arrangements – not for excluding students, but for placing them on courses at the correct level. Increasingly, this is a vital part of their strategy to hold students and hence their tuition fees.

Unemployment has brought fresh demands and opportunities for many community colleges. Some of their responses have been remarkable. When a large factory near to Bunker Hill closed, 48 hours later the college had opened an advice centre to help the redundant workers to explore the possibilities of taking courses which would improve their chances of getting other jobs. They provided facilities for the assessment of prior and experiential learning. The Learning Centre allowed people to study in their own preferred way (by telecourse, tape and slide, or through interactive computer programmes), rather than attending formal classes, and at times which suited them best. This was largely achieved without increasing the college's budget – a nice example of the benefits of the ethical stance. It was something the college could do for its community. It was also a way of looking for additional numbers of students to enrol subsequently, bringing tuition fees with them.

Information systems

There is another characteristic of all American higher education which is beginning to enter British funding arrangements. Students are personally responsible for paying their fees. However, in the USA there is very extensive provision for financial aid under a variety of categories. So colleges have large financial aid offices to help students make the most advantageous applications and cope with all the paper work involved. Similar support services may become increasingly important here.

The diversity of students puts pressure on colleges to respond by offering widely ranging patterns of attendance. This in turn poses problems for colleges in keeping tabs on the details of student attendance, given the variations between and combinations of full-time, part-time, occasional, periodic, and self-determining use of different learning modes. To cope with this, alongside central admissions systems, many colleges have introduced sophisticated information systems, tracking individuals from initial inquiry through admission, registration, academic performance to eventual destination. By using this information the college can check how far, for example, it is actually serving the minorities it claims to serve; or by reviewing student performances, how effectively it is placing students when they arrive. At Bunker Hill, the Vice-President for Planning and External Resources uses this as a research tool.

At Rockland Community College, the Vice-President for Institutional Enhancement needs ready access to all that information for preparing press briefings and submissions for external funding. There is no substitute for having facts and figures about categories of students using the college, courses studied, mode of study, success, completion and retention rates as evidence of student needs and what the college requires to meet them. The President of Delaware Community College reckons he couldn't do his job properly without that information.

Serving the community

The financial success of other kinds of activities also depends on the college being able to convince possible donors that it truly does serve its community. Most colleges have business development units or college companies which raise additional income through providing training and education for employers and other organisations. Others have established trusts through which they raise endowment money for scholarships from the local community, concentrating on leaders in business. They have been driven to some of these expedients because their annual funding has been steadily reduced as a result of the current economic difficulties being experienced in the US. However, these measures are all simply an extension of the ways for a college to be true to its purpose.

Serving a community with many different and rapidly changing expectations requires a willingness to develop new ways of doing things, taking the characteristics of the students a college is trying to attract as the determining factor for what the college actually offers. It is hardly surprising, therefore, to find that some community colleges are at the forefront of developments for assessing prior experiential learning, for developing independent study and learning agreements through learning centres to provide open and flexible learning opportunities. The best ones tend to have a plethora of arrangements with voluntary and community groups so that education and training courses run in those agencies can attract credit. They

give recognition and support to community-based education and training programmes and assist business, industry and human service (social care) systems to tackle the educational needs of residents who have traditionally been excluded from higher education. This is a good way of establishing strong links between the college and its community and keeping the curriculum in tune with developments in the local economy. Due to their strengths in engineering, technology, computing, business and catering (reflecting the earliest assumptions about the kinds of service community colleges would need to offer adults) there are usually strong connections with employers and customised training is the norm for many of them.

Political accountability is another major factor facilitating community responsiveness. Many colleges have their own board of trustees, but in some states several colleges are grouped under a single board of trustees. Trustees tend to be appointed by the state governor, so many are active politicians. Many serve in state legislatures and are involved in decisions about state budgets. They therefore have a direct interest in the effectiveness of the college since it features prominently in their electoral concerns. As trustees they are financially responsible, and the college budget comes under detailed scrutiny before the president and the college can get on with the work. However, it is the service to the community that is at the heart of any arguments within the trustees. Hence the community affairs side of a college's work is heavy and presidents tend to spend a great deal of time lobbying for support and visiting secondary high schools, employers and community groups, including churches.

Difficult and demanding though it may be, it is part and parcel of a democratically supported system. State politicians worry about being re-elected. What happens to the funding of community colleges can be a hot question for some of their constituents. Defending a stance can mean gaining or losing votes. Community groups of all kinds are very active and many are energetic in using community colleges for pursuing their own purposes.

Size is certainly a factor which helps US colleges to serve their community. Rockland Community College in Rockland County in the New York State is fairly typical with an FTE of 6,000 plus, made up of some 20,000 enrolments including full-time and part-time students, some studying for credit courses and many for non-vocational and vocational non-credit courses. College classes begin at 07.00 and end at 21.00. It is open seven days a week. Its Field House for sports and its theatre are booked for months and sometimes years ahead for various community activities. It offers the full range of learning opportunities, on campus, off campus and by learning agreements. These agreements are individually negotiated learning programmes which may be an alternative to taught courses. They record formally what is to be learned, how it is to be learned, and how it is to be assessed. This enables the college to enrol and serve students whatever their working or domestic

obligations. It is all a deliberate attempt to accommodate people's different learning styles and different personal circumstances.

The large size of a college such as Rockland Community College means that the assessing for placing is possible as large numbers mean courses can be run at many different levels and at many different times. However, because the actual enrolment numbers cannot be known before the beginning of a semester, it also means that colleges need to have a list of adjunct faculty (staff) who are willing and able to work part-time, sometimes on a regular basis but sometimes at short notice. This gives a college the flexibility it needs if it is to be responsive to changing requirements. It is also cheaper. Compensation, or the amount paid to a teacher, is lower for a person teaching a single course than when a full-time member of the academic staff teaches the same course. It can also be a contentious career issue for academic staff leading to long negotiations with unions about levels of pay, entitlements to fringe benefits like health insurance and security of employment. It can be a debilitating influence on the college unless strong steps are taken to involve part-time teaching staff in the wider responsibilities of the college, but it is the price of flexibility without which a college cannot be responsive to its community.

So, while American community colleges can offer some pointers to ways of making the rhetoric of education in the community a reality, there are no blueprints on offer. Adaptation not adoption is on offer for those who need it. Nothing is plain sailing for community colleges. They are beset by some of the same budgetary pressures as colleges here. Agreement on annual budgets can be delayed until well into a financial year. There are the usual differences of opinion among the academic and administrative staff as to what a college ought to be doing, tensions about the internal distribution of resources, about the balance between the avowedly academic and the rest. But everything rests on a view of community in which pragmatic considerations fit alongside an ethical position about service.

Chapter 15: An education and an economy for survival: committed to communities in Latin America

Carlos Tamez Luna in conversation with Sue Gardener and Les Brook
Translation by John Payne

'Nowadays, being in education implies not just an act of solidarity but sharing in the pain and suffering of the people.'

Les: *Carlos, the reason I wanted a discussion with you to appear in the book was two-fold. Firstly, I'm convinced it's important to inform people in Britain of just what Third World educators face and what they are seeking to achieve. Secondly, I wanted to see what common ground we have, and what we can learn from you.*

I guess one thing we have in common is a refusal to pretend education has nothing to do with politics, economics and social structures, so can I start by asking what are the key elements for educators in the social, political and economic context of Latin America today?

Carlos: Well, socially...on the one hand, the poor have grown poorer. For example, Nicaragua has a population of 4m and 1.4m people live in very difficult conditions. 600,000 live at or below the poverty line. Farm workers earn $30 a month. There's 50 per cent unemployment, and last year, inflation was running at between 800 and 1,000 per cent. On the other hand, there are new social actors – women, children, indigenous people – who are demanding a direct role as the authors of their own history. There's also a note of scepticism among radical groups who find themselves short of specific alternatives or precise ways forward. Politically, militarism is in retreat, but at the same time, in Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador for example, the military classes constitute powerful economic and political groups with a big say in government decisions. On top of that, the enthusiasm for 'democratisation' does not imply greater opportunities for participation, but rather, effective social control by every means possible. Economically, we have become still more dependent, and loyally

fall in with the plans of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank. Their 'structural adjustment programmes' have brought economic growth for the powerful at the expense of deteriorating conditions for the pauperised majority. Privatisation of basic services has reduced the numbers able to get health, education, housing and occupational benefits.

Les: How do education and training contribute to the survival economy?

Carlos: 'Popular education' and the 'popular solidarity economy' have helped people to be conscious of their problems and organise viable alternative solutions. Education and training both have the purpose of generating alternative means of subsistence. Education contributes to the growth of human values and the dignity of personal, family and community life. Alongside this, popular solidarity economy activities have grown – children's feeding centres, craft workshops, travelling salespersons and 1001 other things.

Les: What is the role of the communities themselves in this context?

Carlos: I'd make one fundamental statement. Community spirit is the antithesis of the capitalist project: our societies have only been able to survive because of the existence of a sense of community and the practice that is associated with it. For example, in Chile, during the Pinochet dictatorship, the poorest and most marginalised sectors of society created ways of surviving which became known worldwide – the community *olla* [soup-kitchens]. People just contributed whatever they had. It was a survival mechanism. It's what we would describe as a solidarity economy within the community.

The '90s will make community solidarity and support even more important. I don't want to be fatalistic, but that's the reality, and we have to confront that reality. There are going to be even more unemployed people, more teenage pregnancies: the statistics just fill you with panic. In Costa Rica, more than 60 per cent of the children are being born to girls of 16 and under. What kind of future do they have? And looking at that statistic, you have to bear in mind that Costa Rica is a relatively sophisticated country in Latin American terms. There's no way that governments are going to pick up the tab. The view of the international economic organisations – the World Bank, the IMF – is that society has to pick up the tab for itself. So our view is that the importance of community solidarity is increasing, and that's certainly what happened during the periods of dictatorships in our countries. It may sound apocalyptic, but that's what's going on. If we understand that reality, we can understand the role of the

community. In these societies, up to 70 per cent of the people may be unemployed.

Les: *So what role can professional educators play?*

Carlos: Faced by this, we popular educators are having to work out what our role is and what sort of commitment from us can maintain people's hopes for a better tomorrow. Nowadays, being in education implies not just an act of solidarity but sharing in the pain and suffering of the people.

A first step is to learn to live with the people in order to understand their situation. There are communities in countries of the south where the relationship is so close that you can talk of real partnership because the teachers and principals identify themselves as members of the community. It's a question of identification.

Educators should not attempt to impose their views as the only truth and solution. They should be prepared to listen to and learn from the people. They should work alongside the people and not try to stand out. They should explain the political, social and economic context, and how people can 'play the market' to their own advantage. Popular educators can support democratic processes, starting from the most immediate local organisational needs. They should be able to analyse and co-ordinate, in a dialectical way, an education and an economy for survival.

Sue: *Can I ask something? I'm thinking particularly of sexuality. Although the issues – take teenage pregnancies as an example – may be evident to everybody, the possibilities are not so obvious. The idea that you can make this into an educational programme may not come from inside the community. Intervention doesn't work unless the issues are basic to the community – but there is intervention. It's important for those with a professional role in education to remember that people can learn without their help, but there is a role for the professional and one of the things we need to find out is how links can be made between support from outside and things generated from inside.*

Carlos: You're right. Take Ixchen in Managua. It's developed from a women's health centre with a strong emphasis on matters of sexuality and contraception to having an effective network in many of the districts of the city.

Sue: *What I found interesting about the Ixchen people was that they combined a dual function – as people with medical knowledge who adopted an educational approach. For example, they would bring women together in groups rather than doing one-to-one counselling. It's a good example of the kind of partnership I mean.*

Carlos: Yes, and the process is dialectical. What I have to say is based upon 20 years' experience. In places like Peru and Ecuador, big cities like Guayacil, where the services from outside are very scanty, it's the community that's organising itself with its own professionals. Doctors who live in the area who are helping the community to survive.

Les: When you say 'their own professionals', are you talking about the children of those people? Were they born in that area?

Carlos: They may have been, or they may have chosen to live there.

Les: So we're back to the importance of identification.

Carlos: Yes. That's exactly my experience.

Les: So what kind of educational programmes are we talking about here?

Carlos: Well, first of all, basic issues such as health and hygiene – and this could include a literacy programme – childcare, family relationships, sexuality for young people and adults... So these educational things are coming out of the community: the community is looking within itself and outside for the people who have these skills and can share them.

Let me give a specific example. In Nicaragua in 1979, when the Sandinistas came to power, 50 per cent of the population was illiterate and over three-quarters of that 50 per cent lived in rural areas. The economy was completely dependent upon agriculture. In order to improve the quality of production and gain access to new markets, and despite the fact that the economy was bankrupt, a massive literacy campaign was mounted because it was an essential, strategic project.

One of the original features of the literacy campaign – which was repeated afterwards in Ecuador – was that it wasn't just about reading and writing. It was about history, community issues, politics and government – so people would be learning to read and write and, say, basic principles of health. The central theme of the campaign in Ecuador was civil rights.

Sue: There are really important lessons in here for us. One of the biggest problems in the UK is the disconnection of literacy teaching from content. And where the two have been connected, the content is about how to communicate from a position of subordination. Carlos, can I ask you – what part do community members play in developing their own programmes?

Carlos: I'll give an example using my own organisation. ALFALIT is a Christian development organisation with a long history of activity in Latin America. The contribution of women, indigenous people, church leaders and

community workers in base communities has been decisive in determining the way the organisation's educational activities have developed. For example, in 1982, everyone was involved in an evaluation of the project's methodology, content, techniques, planning and outreach. Although we were involved in the education of adults, in literacy and other forms of basic education, the curriculum and texts used were based on child education. As a result of the evaluation, materials were published which related to the needs, interests and problems of those taking part, and their specific context. In addition, the methodology we had been using was unsuitable for adults: it did not see education as a lifelong process linked to other aspects of people's lives. It saw it merely as the accumulation of knowledge. After 1982, we adopted the method which we now call 'popular education' to inform all our work.

Les: *What themes dominate the education that takes place in such communities? Are they common across Latin America or is there wide variation?*

Carlos: Many of the main themes are found throughout the region – how to organise and face up to problems; how to acquire skills and knowledge relating to the production and sale of local products; human rights; democratic participation in civil society; land questions; health; ecology. Some themes are specific to particular countries or areas. I'm thinking of peace and national reconciliation, for example, which is setting the pattern for activities in El Salvador and Gúatemala.

Sue: *Is the raw material of the curriculum the people's experience of their problems or the problems themselves or both?*

Carlos: We consider that both the great problems of today and people's experience of those problems are of the utmost importance in constructing the curriculum. It is crucial to start from the given reality, reflect with people on that reality in a critical way, and then go back to reality in order to change it. In Paolo Freire's words, 'action-reflection' on the world.

Sue: *You mentioned 'civil society' earlier. What do you mean by that?*

Carlos: 'Civil society' is the sum of popular organisations, taking particular account of the new social actors who are committed to searching for new and relevant models in the economic, social and political fields. For decades, civil society has been manipulated by the leaders and governments of the traditional parties. Its only function has been to back the candidates of particular tendencies. Nowadays, the alternative ideal is the achievement of greater public participation at key points in public life. In order to achieve that, the starting point must be the local 'barrio', the neighbourhood community. Popular educators have a great contribution to make to

developing leaders committed to service rather than to being bureaucrats exploiting their brothers and sisters.

Les: *Many of us in the north are aware of this kind of work by radical community educators in the south, but what is the character of the 'official' education system?*

Carlos: Well I think it's important that you should not have the idea that we have a universal education system like you do. For example, in Nicaragua only 30 per cent of 13 to 18 year olds are within the educational system. In that same country, despite the remarkable success of the literacy campaign which reduced illiteracy to 13 per cent, progress is being rolled back and illiteracy is now a good deal higher – probably around 25 per cent.

The formal education system in Latin America is there to maintain the status quo. There are very few examples of formal education in which any attempt has been made to seek conceptual or methodological alternatives to match the changing realities. Privatisation in education makes it daily more difficult to generate substantive changes in the system. Because of high costs, fewer and fewer children have access to formal education. Very many teachers and other professionals are unable to find stable employment, and many join the ranks of the unemployed.

Formal education is a kind of fraud. Very few manage to complete all stages: it is cut-throat competition in which the weak and stragglers have no chance at all to get on. The picture becomes even more bleak when the few who do manage to overcome all the obstacles respond by identifying with the aims of the system and turn their backs on their own class.

Les: *How does the education system maintain the status quo?*

Carlos: Both public and private formal education reinforces the dominant ideology. There are just a few teachers who are prepared to question the system and introduce their students to new values. Unconditional support for the status quo is expressed in the way classes are taught, and the clear division between those in authority and those who must obey, and between those who know and those who must learn. In fact, both the form and content of education carry a heavy ideological weight aimed at strengthening anti-human customs, attitudes and values. For example, competition, individualism, superiority, unconditional obedience, passivity, acceptance.

Les: *So how does the 'unofficial' system challenge the status quo?*

Carlos: Not all informal education is alternative, in the sense of being committed to the most dispossessed and to struggling to give dignity to their lives. Informal education only confronts the status quo when it makes participants

conscious of their role in organising, mobilising and taking concerted action to take control of their own lives. It is not enough to denounce injustice and fight for civil rights: these duties that we share need to become part of our practice in order to generate new kinds of human relations. In the political field, it is not sufficient to teach people how to vote: we have to make progress in active participation at every level, local, regional and worldwide.

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